# **Research Article**

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# Patient satisfaction: a tool for quality control

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Patient satisfaction is one of the established yardsticks to measure success of the services being provided in the health facilities and critical issue for healthcare providers. It is a complex attitude because a multitude of variables have been identified as its predictors. Diversity in patients' demographics also molds their perceptions about hospital facilities and services.

**Methods:** A hospital based study has been undertaken between November 2014 and January 2015 at the Dr. B. Borooah Cancer Institute (BBCI), Guwahati, Assam, India with 50 patients. Primary data was collected through survey approach with systematic random sampling from 50 patients. A semi-structured questionnaire was extracted from the literature relating to the patients' satisfaction from healthcare services.

**Results:** Most of the patients were from underserved sections of the community. The overall rating for doctor-patient relationship had 68% satisfied respondents. 70% respondents were satisfied with basic facilities; only 40% respondent were satisfied with information and support services offered 30% respondents were dissatisfied with the organization of care in the institute, overall the respondent posted a satisfaction percentage of 64%.

**Conclusions:** From the present study we can conclude that, assessing satisfaction of patients is simple and cost effective way for evaluation of hospital services and has helped finding that patients were more satisfied with behaviour of doctors and dissatisfaction was found to be more regarding cleanliness in the toilets and the wards.

Keywords: Patient satisfaction, Hospital, Semi-structured questionnaire

# **INTRODUCTION**

Healthcare industries have seen recent movement towards continuous quality improvement and this has gained momentum since 1990. According to Donabedians' declaration for incorporating patients' perception into quality assessment, healthcare managers, incorporate patient centered care as a major component in the healthcare mission. Recently healthcare regulators shifted towards a market-driven approach of turning patient satisfaction surveys into quality improvement tool for overall organizational performance. Laurent et al conducted a study in a tertiary teaching hospital in France aiming to assess the opinions of clinical staff towards the

effect of in-patient satisfaction surveys on the quality improvement process. A favorable result of 94% revealed that the patient was able to judge hospital service quality, especially in its relational, organizational and environmental dimensions.<sup>3</sup>

Patient satisfaction is multidimensional aspect, vital key marker, an important indicator for measuring the quality in health care. Patient satisfaction affects clinical outcomes, patient retention, and medical malpractice claims. It affects the timely, efficient, and patient-centered delivery of quality health care. Patient satisfaction is thus a proxy but a very effective indicator to measure the success of doctors and hospitals.<sup>4</sup>

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In this present study, the ultimate goal is carry out deep investigation into a number of research studies that critically discuss the relationship of dependent and independent influential attributes to overall patient satisfaction in addition to its impact on the quality improvement process within healthcare organizations.

With this background of numerous studies supporting and espousing the cause of patient satisfaction with service provided by a hospital, the present study was undertaken, to assess how satisfied or dissatisfied are patients coming to the B. Borooah Cancer Institute, Guwahati, Assam, India.

## **METHODS**

A hospital based study has been undertaken between November 2014 and January 2015 at the Dr. B. Borooah Cancer Institute (BBCI), Guwahati, Assam, India with 50 patients.

Primary data was collected through survey approach using systematic random sampling design from a semi-structured questionnaire was extracted from the literature relating to the patient satisfaction from healthcare services and distributed among 50 patients of all demographic backgrounds. Surveys are very popular among the researchers on measuring patients' satisfaction from healthcare services around the world. Total number of patients was decided as per the advice of the instructions issued by the Symbiosis school center of health care, under whom this study was registered.

The questionnaire consisted of 5 points with indicating lowest and 5 the highest scores. Patients indicated their level of satisfaction by selecting responses ranging from 5=poor, 4=fair, 3=good, 2=very good, 1=excellent, these who chose 5 or 4 i.e. poor or fair were considered dissatisfied while those choosing either 3, 2 or 1 were considered satisfied with the services and quality of care patients were also asked for any specific inputs or complaints regarding their encounters in the Hospital.

# Statistical analysis

The completed questionnaire was studied; the data tabulated under various headings as per the questionnaire and analyzed using simple percentage test, the sample size being too small to warrant statistical analysis.

# **RESULTS**

A total of 50 patients were included in this study. The mean age of the study population was 47.78 years. Males comprised 34% of the respondents while 66% were females. Majority of the respondents were from the rural area (86%). The male study population largely comprised of farmers or agricultural laborers 56%, while 27% were employed in offices and small business, the remainder 13% were daily wage workers. The female population

comprised almost all housewives (83%), 15% of the females studied ran small pan shops or tea stalls, 2% of them were school teachers. 46% of the respondents were illiterate. A good number belong to the lower socioeconomic strata 82% with family income around Rs. 50,000/- per year (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio demographic profile.

Age of patient	N = 50
< 20 years	2%
21 years-30 years	2%
31 years - 40 years	26%
41 years - 50 years	28%
51 years - 60 years	20%
> 60 years	22%
Gender	
Male	34%
Female	66%
Education	
Illiterate	46%
Primary	20%
Matriculation	27%
Higher secondary	2%
Graduation and above	5%
Family income/monthly	
< Rs.  3000 = 00	23%
Rs. 3000 = Rs 5000	44%
Rs. 5000 = Rs. 8000	23%
> Rs. 8000	10%

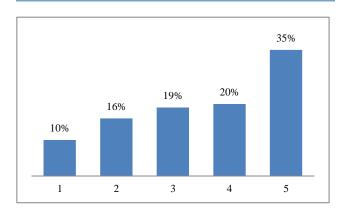


Figure 1: Aspect of care in outpatient department.

Attitude and behaviour of personal in the outpatient department (OPD), 64% of the population was satisfied with the behaviour of the registration clerk, 59% were satisfied with the behavior of the supporting staff, 60% were satisfied with the services provided by the pharmacy, while only 45% were satisfied with the nurses (Figure 1).

86% were satisfied by the behaviour of the doctors in the outpatient department (OPD), whereas in the indoor wards only 50% were satisfied with the behaviour and

time devoted by the doctors to them. Only 40% were satisfied with nursing care in wards (Figure 2).

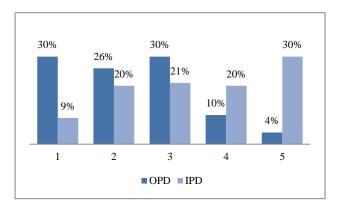


Figure 2: Aspect of care doctors' outpatient department vs. in-patient department.

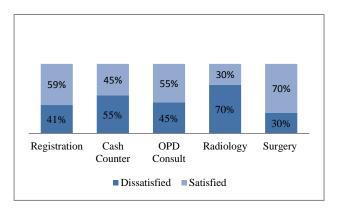


Figure 3: Satisfaction levels of waiting time in various services.

In current study, the average waiting period and patients' satisfaction or dissatisfaction was also surveyed. 59% of the respondents were satisfied with the time for registration, 55% were dissatisfied with the cash counter waiting time, 45% were dissatisfied with the wait at the outpatient department (OPD), for a doctor to see them. 70% were dissatisfied with the waiting time for radiology, while 30% were dissatisfied with the wait for surgery (Figure 3).

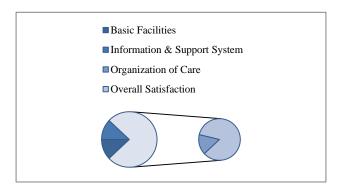


Figure 4: Representation of overall satisfied respondents.

The overall rating for doctor-patient relationship had 68% satisfied respondents. 70% respondents were satisfied with basic facilities; only 40% respondent were satisfied with information and support services offered 30% respondents were dissatisfied with the organization of care in the institute, overall the respondent posted a satisfaction percentage of 64% (Figure 4).

### **DISCUSSION**

The majority of the respondents were in the age group 30-60 years according to the socio-demographic profile, which is the economically productive group for those belonging to the underserved, needy section of society. Amongst them 46% were illiterate and only 14% had education beyond matriculation, 82% of the study population had income of less than Rs. 5,000/- a month. This weaker section is largely dependent on government hospitals and these needy people do not have large expectations from the hospital besides their medical treatment and provision of basis amenities during their hospital stay, an opinion shared by Singh S et al.<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of the present study was to assess the hospital services by getting a feedback from patients visiting the hospital and availing services both in the outdoor patients department as well as admitted patients. Similar studies have been done by Chopra A and Singh S et al. <sup>5,6</sup> Our study found 86% of respondent satisfied with the behaviour and time devoted by doctors in OPDs as compared to 91% by Singh S et al and 90.20% by Chopra A. <sup>6</sup>

The present study found 51% of the respondents dissatisfied with the toilet facilities compared to 35.5% dissatisfied respondents in a study by Qadri SS et al. Studies by Sivalenka S and Peerasak L et al showed contrasting levels of satisfaction at 65% and 3.52% respectively. Aleena et al reported 80% respondents as dissatisfied. These finding all go in lines of the need of immediate and rigorous attention needed on the cleanliness and maintenance of toilets in hospitals.

Majority of the patients were satisfied (82%) with the food services provided by the hospital comparable results were found in studies by Qadri SS et al 81.75% and Aleena et al (82%).<sup>7,10</sup> This suggests that health care seekers seek out packages with quality hospitality and related facilities to solace them. Discussing related facilities, parking is a big success at BBCI with 100% of respondents appreciating the parking availability this is unprecedented and not comparable to any study reviewed. But in a similar view 92% of respondents were distressed by the lack of proper signings and directions or information counters, making moving around the campus decidedly difficult, similar deficiency was noted by Singh S et al.<sup>6</sup>

Muhondwa EPY et al, reported similar satisfaction levels as our study for waiting times for various services but an Indian study at a private hospital in Manipur reported by for better satisfaction levels where waiting period was concerned. <sup>11</sup> Laishram N et al this is possibly because of the fact that privately run institutions are were oriented to services as their profitability directly depends on it. <sup>12</sup>

Lastly when comparing different aspect of services, overall patient satisfaction assessed in this study was found to be 64%, which is comparable to that reported in 2001 by Mahapatra et al in Andhra Pradesh (63%), but is significantly lower than those reported by Deva et al Kashmir 80%, Kumari et al from Lucknow in 2009 -81.6%. <sup>13-15</sup> Jawahar S reported at 90-95% satisfied respondents this high figure certainly matches the Laishram N et al study and could perhaps be linked that both these studies are from the private sector where services are oriented to bring in more revenue, not that this is a negative but rather, such corporate culture should be imbibed in the government and semi-government institutes. <sup>12,16</sup>

Apart from the ways the services are delivered, differences in study population and hence patient's expectations could affect satisfaction levels. The latter could also be affected by socio cultural differences and variations in the level of literacy.

The limitation of the study was a very small cross section of the patients using the services of the hospital, it cannot be a true indicator of majority of the patients, but it does point the direction to take to improve services.

#### **CONCLUSION**

From this study, we concluded that, assessing satisfaction in patients is a simple and easy way to point out areas of deficient services. The overall satisfaction levels were well above half the study population, and some services had highly satisfied respondents, but areas like toilet cleanliness, waiting time for investigations and general behaviour of staff left a lot to work upon.

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Ethical approval: The study was approved by the

Institutional Ethics Committee

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