REVISTA ESPACIOS

Estimation of the contentment of patients as consumers of medical services

Estimación de la satisfacción de los pacientes como consumidores de servicios médicos

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Content

ABSTRACT:

As the basis of strategic development of medical organization, the opinion of patients as consumers of health services is analyzed. The research method is a sociological survey of patients and hospital clinics of a Republic medical institution. The purpose of the study is to evaluate patients' contentment with the quality of medical care. Basing on the analysis of sociological data, the perspective and problem areas in the functioning of medical institution are identified, recommendations are offered to help improve the quality of medical services.
Keywords: medical institution, patients, quality of services, health workers, contentment.

RESUMEN:

Como base del desarrollo estratégico de la organización médica, se analiza la opinión de los pacientes como consumidores de servicios de salud. El método de investigación es una encuesta sociológica de pacientes y clínicas de hospitales de una institución médica de la República. El propósito del estudio es evaluar la satisfacción de los pacientes con la calidad de la atención médica. Basándose en el análisis de los datos sociológicos, se identifican las áreas de perspectiva y problema en el funcionamiento de la institución médica, se ofrecen recomendaciones para ayudar a mejorar la calidad de los servicios médicos.
Palabras clave: institución médica, pacientes, calidad de los servicios, trabajadores de salud, contentamiento.

1. Introduction

In compliance with the guidelines of World Health Organization, the notion of the quality of medical assistance includes, alongside with the adequacy and optimal character of the

treatment and the used resources, also the patients' contentment with the medical services. Besides, monitoring research of WHO in 2016 focused on the analysis of the coverage of population with medical services, their quality and accessibility (World Health Statistics 2016). Thus, the research of people's attitude to the rendered medical services is, on the one hand, an implementation of the mentioned methodological guidelines of World Health Organization, and, on the other hand, serves as an analytical means of feedback between patient and medical personnel.

2. Bibliography review

The estimation of patients' contentment with the quality of rendered services is an object of attention of not only researchers (Prakash 2010; Kupfer and Bond 2012; Leontieva, et. al. 2016; Poulas, et. al. 2008; Tang, et.al. 2013), but also of administrative-managerial personnel of medical institutions, like Republic Clinical Hospital #2 in Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan, Russia), which served as a site of empirical research for the authors of this paper.

In scientific literature, the research of patients' contentment with the quality of rendered services has various angles of analysis. These are, first of all, the search of methodological approaches (Larsson 2000; Siburina, et. al. 2013; Spiridonov and Shulaev 2013), the analysis of correlation between patients' contentment and their personal psychological features and living conditions (Findik, et. al. 2010; Rahmqvist and Bara 2010; Grøndahl, et. al. 2011), as well as other indicators within the notion of "quality of medical assistance" formulated by World Health Organization (Chatterjee, et. al. 2012; Glickman, et. al. 2010; Nanda and Andresen 1998). Alongside with the research specifying the quality of services in various spheres of medicine, one should highlight the scientific works which study the population's contentment with medical services during large-scale events. These include, for example, revealing the specific problems of rendering medical services during large sports competitions (Razumovskaya, et. al. 2014; Mishakin, et. al. 2015).

3. Research method

Sociological polling of patients of a medical institution was carried out by the personnel from October to November 2015, following the Order of the State Autonomous Medical Establishment "Republic Clinical Hospital #2" of 22.09.2015 # 285/06. The sample volume was 434 patients, including: polyclinic patients – 149 (dentist's – 48, consultative policlinics – 41, therapy divisions – 60); in-patients – 285 (on average 25 patients in each clinical department).

The polling objective was to obtain an independent evaluation of the quality of medical service rendering in Republic Clinical Hospital #2. For quality evaluation we used the indicators and calculation technique adopted by the Order of the Ministry of Healthcare of the Russian Federation of 28.11.2014 #787n "On indicators characterizing the general criteria of evaluating the quality of service rendering by medical institutions". The numerical score system was used: 0 to 5 points depending on the percentage of patients who positively evaluated the aspect of the medical service quality:

$$k_2 < 70\% \quad 70\% \leq k_2 < 75\% \quad 75\% \leq k_2 < 80\% \quad 80\% \leq k_2 < 85\% \quad 85\% \leq k_2 < 90\% \quad k_2 \geq 90\%$$

The polyclinic patients' questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, the maximal score was 50. The in-patient questionnaire consisted of 11 questions, the maximal score was 55.

4. Result and discussion

Contentment implies the correspondence of the received services to the patient's expectations and is perceived if the patient's needs are satisfied. That is why the poll questions were aimed at evaluating the fulfillment of the patient's needs in informing, professionalism and timeliness of medical service rendering, as well as in organizational, hospital stay and emotional-psychological conditions.

Polyclinic patients in general gave 1204 positive answers out of 1440. Satisfaction amounted to 83.6%. The total score in the policlinics was 31 (Table 1), including in the consultative policlinics – 30 points, in the therapy department – 33 points, in the dentist's department – 36 points.

Table 1. Results of polling the policlinics patients

#	Question	Patients' answers		Evaluation of the indicator	
		YES	NO	%	points
1	Are you satisfied with the quality and completeness of the information displayed in the policlinics, referring to the functioning of RCH #2 policlinics and the order of medical services rendering?	122	23	84.1	3
2	Are you satisfied with the quality and completeness of the information located in the official web-site of RCH #2, referring to the functioning of RCH #2 policlinics and the order of medical services rendering?	111	28	79.9	2
3	Were you registered for the appointment with the doctor (received a coupon with the indication of appointment time and doctor's surname) during your first visit to the policlinics?	114	32	78.1	2
4	Are you satisfied with the hospital stay conditions in RCH #2 policlinics?	116	30	79.5	2
5	Did the doctor see you at the appointed time?	102	40	71.8	1
6	Did you undergo the diagnostic examination at the appointed time?	122	20	85.9	4
7	Do you positively evaluate the amicability and politeness of the personnel of RCH #2 policlinics?	136	11	92.5	5
8	Do you positively evaluate the competence of the personnel of RCH #2 policlinics?	127	18	87.6	4
9	Are you satisfied with the services rendered to you?	127	18	87.6	4
10	Are you ready to recommend RCH #2 policlinics for medical assistance?	127	16	88.8	4
11	Total in the policlinics	1204	236	83.6	31

The indicator "Amicability and competence of medical staff" received high points both in the policlinics in general and in its separate divisions: 4-5 points (Tab.1). Amicability of medical staff implies emotional-psychological stability, patience, ability to calm a patient who is often

under stress, to explain the essence of the current situation and the algorithm of further actions. The lowest contentment with the rendered medical services (3 points) and a poor willingness to recommend the medical institution (3 points) was observed among the patients of consultative policlinics. Consultative policlinic is the first stage for a patient visiting a medical institution. Negative attitude or, all the more so, incompetent consultation may cause nihilism in the patient's further actions or inadequate results of examination and diagnostics. The patients of the dentist's department gave 5 points to both indicators, and the patients of the therapy department – 4 points.

The largest number of negative answers was given to the question about seeing a doctor at the appointed time - 1point (Tab.1). Almost 40.0% of the patients were not received at the appointed time. Analysis of this indicator by the policlinics departments shows that the patients' negative attitude was formed due to the unsatisfactory functioning of consultative policlinics and therapy department, where 31% and 40% of the respondents, accordingly, were not received at the appointed time (0 points). An example of good organization is dentist's department with 4 points (11.0 %), i.e. with a score higher than average in the medical institution. Probably, the unpunctuality of the doctors of some departments can be explained by the sectoral norms of the duration of a doctor's appointment, which were introduced by the Russian Ministry of Healthcare. Physicians of the outpatient departments must spend 15 minutes per patient on average, neurologists - 22 minutes, ophthalmologists - 14 minutes, and otolaryngologists - 16 minutes. Such norms may lead to reducing the number of medical staff and increase of the workload per doctor. The growth of the "patient flow" will hardly improve the quality of medical service. This novelty will be advantageous not for patients but for the insurance companies within the General Medical Insurance system, as it simplifies the control over the doctor's time regulation in medical institutions.

The problem zones for all departments are general conditions of hospital stay and informational richness of the web-site of the organization (2 points each) (Tab.1). While the conditions of hospital stay are directly connected with the budget funding, the rate of information supply can be increased by the administration of the medical institution independently. In the context of modern informational management, feedback is, according to the researchers (Gainullina and Leontyeva 2013; Leontieva, et. al. 2014), realization of the "right for communication" in "doctor-patient" system, which provides comfortable organizational and psychological situation for both parties.

The respondents who answered the open questions of the questionnaire gave full answers confirming the revealed problems. The visitors' claims refer mainly to the duration of waiting time, even in case of a previous appointment: from 3-4 weeks to 3-4 months. Accordingly, the patients' proposals come to simplifying the procedure of making an appointment with the doctor via the web-site and to fill the web-site with up-to-date information.

The inmates in general gave 2878 positive answers out of 3071. Contentment amounted to 93.7%. The total score in the hospital was 54 (Table 2), including in the cardiology department, therapy department #1, therapy department #3, surgery, maternity department – 54 points, therapy department #2, therapy department #4, gynecology department #1, gynecology department #2 – 53 points, neurology department #1 – 50 points, neurology department #2 – 49 points, endocrinology department – 44 points.

Table 2. Results of polling the inmates

#	Question	Patients' answers		Evaluation of the indicator	
		YES	NO	%	points
	Are you satisfied with the quality and completeness of				

#	Question				
1	the information displayed in the hospital, referring to the functioning of RCH #2 and the order of medical services rendering?	272	14	95.1	5
2	Are you satisfied with the quality and completeness of the information located in the official web-site of RCH #2, referring to the functioning of the hospital and the order of medical services rendering?	226	23	90.8	5
3	Were you hospitalized at the appointed time?	255	8	97	5
4	How much time did you wait in the reception department before you were hospitalized:	Average time 39 minutes			4
	- more than 2 hours	5		1.8	
	- from 1 hour 15 minutes to 2 hours	11		3.9	
	- from 1 hour to 1 hour 15 minutes	4		1.4	
	- from 45 minutes to 1 hour	20		7.0	
	- from 30 minutes to 45 minutes	87		30.5	
	- less than 30 minutes	158		55.4	
5	Are you satisfied with the hospital stay conditions in the department of RCH #2?	280	3	98.9	5
6	Are you satisfied with the food offered in the department?	269	10	96.4	5
7	Are you satisfied with the actions of the personnel taking care of the patient?	283	2	99.3	5
8	Do you positively evaluate the amicability and politeness of the personnel of RCH #2?	287	0	100	5
9	Do you positively evaluate the competence of the medical personnel of RCH #2?	286	0	100	5
10	Are you satisfied with the services rendered to you?	280	3	98.9	5
11	Are you ready to recommend RCH #2 for medical assistance?	282	3	98.9	5
	Total in the hospital	2878	193	93.7	54

The most important indicator – "professional competence" – is estimated as 100%, which

confirms the efficiency and, according to some researchers (Ivanenko, et. al. 2015), competitiveness of the system of professional education and retraining of personnel. In the total evaluation of the hospital, all indicators were given maximal 5 points (Tab.2), i.e. more than 90% of the patients gave positive answers to each aspect of the services quality. One exception is the indicator of an average waiting time in the reception department (39 minutes, which corresponds to 4 points) (Tab.2). According to the technique proposed by the Russian Ministry of Healthcare, the ideal waiting time should be less than 30 minutes, which corresponds to 5 points; more than a half of all inmates reported such waiting time (55.4%) (Tab.2). In the hospital departments the situation is reverse. The minimal waiting time (32 minutes) in the reception department was reported by the patients of maternity department and therapy department #4 (80 % of the patients – less than 30 minutes). The longest waiting time (57 minutes) was reported in the gynecology department #2: a quarter of the patients waited for the appointment for 1 hour 15 minutes to 2 hours. Thus the patients' proposals mainly refer to the timeliness of medical services and improving the hospital stay conditions – from variety of food to additional household appliances and to kiosks with essential commodities and newspapers and magazines. Alongside with proposals and claims, patients expressed gratitude for medical staff for their high professionalism and attentive service.

5. Conclusion

We can conclude that the level of patients' contentment with the quality of medical service in Republic Clinical Hospital #2 of Kazan is rather high. The work of the hospital was positively evaluated by 93.7% respondents (Tab.2), while the medical services in polyclinics – by 83.6% respondents (Tab.1).

The analysis of the patients' opinions allowed to reveal the "problem zones" in the process of medical service rendering. To increase the population's contentment with the quality if medical service, it is necessary to focus the attention of the managerial personnel on the following spheres of the medical institutions functioning:

1. systematization of the procedure of making an appointment with the doctor in the policlinics, in order to reduce waiting time and eliminate queues;
2. increase of hospital stay comfort both in the outpatient-policlinics and in the inpatient departments;
3. systematic informational up-grade of the web-site of the medical institution with the up-to-date information, feedback development in the "doctor-patient" system.

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