

Commission for
Health Improvement

Local health services
patient survey 2003

CHI 文文



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Introduction

A vital step to improving hospitals and other health services so that they meet the needs of the patient is to ask the patients themselves what they think about the NHS. One way of doing this is by carrying out surveys of patients who have recently used health services. The Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) is responsible for carrying out national surveys of the NHS. By running these surveys across the country and publishing the results, CHI is able to provide important feedback about the experience patients have of their local health services.

During 2003 CHI carried out three national surveys asking patients across England about their experiences of **accident and emergency (A&E)**, **outpatients** and **primary care services**. CHI has now published three reports summarising the key findings from the surveys and describing the patient's experiences of each of these services.

This report summarises the key findings from the survey of primary care services. All 304 NHS primary care trusts (PCTs) in England took part and over 123,000 registered patients completed the survey.

The results of the survey and the patients experience relating to your local health service are available in detailed reports for each NHS primary care trust and can be found on the CHI website www.chi.gov.uk/eng/surveys/nps2003/pct.shtml

Local health services

Primary care trusts (PCTs) are responsible for providing access to a wide range of health services. These services are delivered by a team of health professionals based at local health centres or surgeries, including general practitioners (GPs), family doctors, practise nurses, district nurses, midwives and health visitors. PCTs are also responsible for the services provided by out of hours care, pharmacists, NHS dental services and other health services within each local area.

Everyone is entitled to register with a GP and a list of all registered patients is maintained by each PCT. The respondents were asked to complete the survey by thinking about their most recent contact with local health services, whether for themselves or for a child in their care.

Contact with the surgery

Of the patients who responded to the survey 86% had visited their local health centre or GP surgery during the previous 12 months. A small percentage 2% reported that someone from the surgery had visited them at home and 12% said they had not seen anyone from their local surgery during the last 12 months.

Of those patients who had seen someone from their local health centre during the past year, 92% reported that their last contact had been for a medical problem for themselves and only 8% said that it was for a child in their care.

Registering with a new GP

Ninety two percent of patients had kept the same GP during the previous 12 months. Of the 8% who had changed their GP, 70% found it very easy and 20% said it had been fairly easy to register with another GP. However, 6% found it fairly difficult or very difficult (4%) to register with another GP.

“It should be made easier to change doctors if you wish. You should feel you have the right to change.”

“I have heard that it is very difficult to change doctors - you have to go to a separate panel and give your reasons for changing, whereas the doctor can just strike patients off with no reason - this is very unfair and pompous.”

“It is extremely difficult to get registered. I only got a new GP as a new surgery opened near me. Even then, the staff spoke English as a second language.”

The reasons given by the patients for changing their GP included moving house (54%), their GP had retired or moved away (28%), their previous GP / health centre had closed (2%) or they were unhappy with their previous GP (9%).

Each PCT produces a leaflet providing information on local NHS services and how to access them entitled *Your guide to local health services*. Only 25% of patients had received a copy of this leaflet and 75% said they had not received a copy (these figures exclude patients who did not know or could not remember whether they had received the leaflet).

Of those patients who did recall receiving a copy, 87% said they found it useful, either definitely (43%) or to some extent (44%). However, 2% of these respondents did not find it useful and 11% had not read it.

Accessing health services

NHS Direct

When asked if they had heard of NHS Direct, a 24 hour helpline staffed by nurses, 72% said they had, 3% were not sure and 26% of respondents had not heard of this helpline service.

"I would not even know where to find the NHS Direct number."

"NHS Direct has not been advertised very much e.g. what can it tell you and what is the number and can you approach through the web?"

Of those patients who had heard of NHS Direct, 22% had contacted the helpline, either for themselves (10%) or on behalf of someone else (12%). But 78% had not contacted NHS Direct.

"Excellent response and help from NHS Direct (twice in the last three months). Helpful, supportive staff and clear directions were given on the phone; lots of time to talk – cheerful, too."

"My call to NHS Direct was totally unsatisfactory – very inefficient and no help in an emergency – luckily the GP came to the rescue."

Contacting the GP surgery by telephone

Patients often need to contact their GP surgery by telephone, for example, to make an appointment or discuss a medical problem with a doctor.

The survey found that 19% telephoned the surgery to discuss a medical problem with the doctor during the past 12 months.

Of those patients who had tried to telephone the surgery, 51% did not have any problem in getting through, but 49% of patients did experience problems in telephoning the surgery, either sometimes (41%) or always (7%).

"My surgery is great and the only problem ever encountered has been when calling it has sometimes taken over three hours to get through."

"It's always difficult to get through to my GPs on the phone, which is annoying and costly and when I do get through the system of appointments has almost always altered in some way, it's very confusing and upsetting."



Surgery opening hours

Nineteen percent of patients said they had been put off going to their GP surgery/health centre, either sometimes (14%) or often (5%), during the past 12 months because the opening times were inconvenient.

All respondents were asked how they felt about extended surgery opening hours. If it was possible for the GP surgery/health centre to open at additional times, 32% would like it to be open at weekends and a further 28% would prefer it to be open in the evenings. Only 7% would prefer the surgery to open for early morning sessions and 32% of respondents said they would not like the surgery to open for additional hours.

“This could be improved by weekend appointments for people who work away from home or are at work all week and cannot take time off for a health check.”

“Evening surgeries for workers who do not want to take time off during the day for non urgent appointments would be most helpful.”

Out of hours care

The survey found that 18% of patients had tried to contact their local health centre/GP surgery about a medical problem when the surgery was closed (either for themselves or on behalf of someone else) during the past 12 months.

Of those respondents who had telephoned their local surgery when it was closed, 70% reported that the last time they had tried to contact the surgery they got through within a few minutes. But 15% had to wait a long time to get through and a further 15% were unable to get through to anyone.

After contacting the surgery when it was closed, 27% went to an out of hours GP surgery, 19% were given medical advice over the telephone and stayed at home and in 17% of cases, a doctor or nurse visited the patient at home. A further 11% of patients were advised to go to their GP surgery/health centre when it opened and 13% of patients went to the emergency department at a hospital, either by arranging their own transport (8%) or having an ambulance called for them (5%). In 12% of cases, something else happened.

The survey found that when a doctor or nurse visited the patient at home, they arrived within one hour of the telephone call for 40% of patients. A further 30% of patients waited between one and two hours for the doctor or nurse to visit, 24% waited between two and six hours and 6% of patients waited for six hours or more for the doctor or nurse to visit them at home.

Waiting for an appointment

The survey found that 91% of the patients who had been in contact with their surgery during the past 12 months had an appointment. Fifty five percent of patients contacted the surgery to arrange an appointment – 17% of these patients were seen on the same working day and 8% were seen on the next working day. A further 7% had to wait two working days for an appointment and 13% had to wait more than two days but less than one week. Ten percent had to wait a week or longer for their appointment and 9% of patients were seen without an appointment.

“We are looked after very well at our Doctor’s surgery and they come out very quickly to your home when needed.”

Surgery waiting times

Of those patients who had seen someone from their GP surgery/local health centre during the past 12 months, 97% had visited the surgery. These patients reported that on their last visit to the surgery, they had been seen on time or early in 23% of cases. A further 44% of patients waited up to 15 minutes after their stated appointment time

"You are expected to turn up in good time for the appointment, only to sit for 15 to 45 minutes waiting to be seen."

"I would just like to say that when you have an appointment to see the GP you are usually kept waiting 30 to 40 minutes over the appointment time before you do actually see the doctor."

(so in total, 67% were seen within 15 minutes of their stated appointment time). A further 20% waited between 16 and 30 minutes and 6% waited between 31 and 60 minutes. A small percentage 1% waited more than one hour beyond their stated appointment time (the remaining 6% of patients were seen without an appointment).

Surgery – reception

Of the patients that responded 26% rated the courtesy of the receptionist as excellent when they arrived at the surgery, 60% rated the courtesy of the receptionist as either very good (36%) or good (24%). However, 11% of patients rated the courtesy of the receptionist as fair, 2% rated it as poor and 1% rated it as very poor.

Sixty seven percent of patients reported that other patients in the reception area could overhear them talking to the receptionist when they arrived, but they did not mind. However, 16% of patients said they could be overheard by other patients and they were not happy about this. Another 16% of patients said that other patients could not overhear them talking to the receptionist.

"On visiting my GP surgery with a personal problem, the receptionist asked me if it was urgent enough for an appointment. I told her yes, I thought it was. She then asked me what my problem was. The surgery was packed so I said I did not want to discuss it in front of everyone."



Surgery – accessibility

Three quarters of patients (75%) found it very easy to move around inside the surgery/ health centre, while 23% of patients said it was fairly easy and 2% said it was not at all easy to get around inside the surgery.

Surgery – cleanliness

Three quarters of patients (75%) rated the surgery/health centre as very clean. A further 24% said it was fairly clean. Only 1% of patients thought the surgery was not very clean or not at all clean.

Seeing a health care professional

Among those patients who had seen someone from their local health centre/GP surgery during the last 12 months, 58% saw their usual GP and 28% saw another GP in the practice. A further 11% saw a practice nurse and under 1% saw a district nurse. Fewer than 0.5% of patients saw a midwife or a health visitor and 2% of patients saw another health care professional.

"My own doctor's care was excellent. He was always understanding and I was treated with great respect."

Most patients (93%) felt that the person they saw had treated them with respect and dignity all of the time. But 6% of patients felt they were treated with respect and dignity some of the time and 1% of patients felt they were not treated with respect and dignity.

"Staff should be trained to treat patients with more respect."

Most patients (85%) thought that the last health care professional they saw (either at the surgery or on a home visit) knew enough about their condition or treatment. However, 12% of patients thought that the person they saw knew something, but not enough and 3% of patients thought that they knew little or nothing about their condition or treatment.

Communication issues

The survey identified several areas where communication between health care professionals and patients could be improved:

- 84% of patients said that the health care professional they saw had definitely listened to them, 15% felt that they had only listened to some extent and 1% of patients said that the health care professional they saw did not listen to what they had to say
- 76% said they were given an explanation of the reasons for any treatment or action that they could understand completely, but 20% said they were given an explanation that they could understand to some extent and 3% of patients were not given an explanation of the reasons for any treatment or action in a way they could understand. (These figures exclude the 6% of patients who said they did not need an explanation)

Of those patients who had questions to ask:

- 79% said they definitely got answers they could understand from the health care professional they saw
- 19% were given answers that they could understand to some extent
- 2% were not given answers that they could understand
- 1% of patients did not have an opportunity to ask any questions (These figures exclude those patients who did not need to ask any questions)

Most patients (99%) did not need any help understanding English. Of those who did need help:

- 16% said there was someone from the surgery who could interpret for them when they last saw someone from their local health centre/GP surgery
- 43% said that a relative or friend was able to interpret for them
- 41% of patients who needed help did not have anyone who could interpret for them

Sixty five percent of patients felt they were definitely able to discuss any emotional issues that might be affecting their health for example, anxiety and depression. Twenty three percent of patients were able to discuss these issues to some extent and 12% of patients wanted to, but felt they were not able to discuss any emotional issues, which may be affecting their health. (These figures exclude those patients who did not feel it was necessary to discuss any emotional issues).

“Appointment times are sometimes too short, usually not enough time to discuss related problems.”

“I would like to have talked to someone about my health problems as a whole and I would like to be treated as an intelligent person by doctors.”



Over half of patients (57%) felt they were definitely able to discuss how their family and/or living situation might be affecting their health for example, housing problems, family responsibilities or work related problems. Almost one third (30%) of patients were able to discuss these issues to some extent and 13% of patients wanted to, but were not able to discuss how their family and/or living situation might be affecting their health. (These figures exclude those patients who did not want or need to discuss these issues.)

Those patients (87% of respondents) who were able to discuss how their family and/or living situation might be affecting their health (either definitely or to some extent) were asked whether the health care professional they saw had referred them to anyone else to help with this situation:

- 17% had been referred to someone for further help
- 3% were not referred to anyone but thought that they should have been referred
- 80% were not referred to anyone else, but did not think it was necessary

“My GP is very brisk and business like. There is no real encouragement to discuss worries, but I would like the opportunity.”

Tests and referrals

Tests

Over half (56%) of the patients who had seen someone from their local health centre/GP surgery during the previous 12 months had been given tests at the surgery for example, blood tests, swabs, smear tests. The survey identified several areas where information about these tests could be improved:

- those patients who had tests were asked whether the purpose of their most recent test(s) was explained in a way they could understand. Eighty two percent said that the purpose of their tests had been completely explained, 15% said the purpose of their tests had been explained to some extent and 3% of patients said the purpose of the tests was not explained in a way they could understand
- 90% were told how they would get the results of their tests but 10% of patients were not given this information
- 89% were told when they should expect to get the results of their tests but more than one in ten (11%) were not given this information
- 89% had been given their test results: 75% were given their test results on time or early, but 14% got their results later than expected. The remaining 11% of patients had not received their results – 5% said they did not get their results at all and 6% were still waiting for their results

Of those patients who had received their test results:

- 73% said that their tests results had definitely been explained in a way they could understand
- 21% said their results had been explained to some extent
- 6% of patients said that their test results had not been explained in a way they could understand.

“Patients should be given the choice and the right to choose which hospital they would like to be referred.”

Referrals

Of those patients who had seen someone from their local health centre/GP surgery during the past 12 months, 44% had been referred to another professional for example, a hospital consultant, physiotherapist, dietician, counsellor or someone in social services.

Of those patients who had been referred to someone else, 73% were not given any choice about where they went – whether to hospital or to see a specialist.

“I have a good GP – efficient and refers her patients quickly to the appropriate specialist when necessary.”

Of those patients who had been seen by someone else:

- 61% said that the person they saw had all the necessary information about them and their condition or treatment, when they were first seen
- 31% of these patients said the person they saw had the required information to some extent
- 8% said that the person they were referred to did not have all the necessary information about the patient and their condition. (These figures exclude the 9% of patients who had been referred to someone but had not seen them yet)

Medicines

Almost half (46%) of the survey respondents had been prescribed new medicine including tablets, suppositories and injections by a doctor from their GP surgery/local health centre during the last 12 months.

Of those patients 55% said that the last time they were given a new prescription, they were definitely involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about the best medicine for them. But 30% of these patients were involved to some extent and 15% were not involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their medication.

The survey identified several issues where the information given to patients about their medication could be improved. Of those patients who were given new prescriptions and who wanted information:

- 82% said that they were given enough information about the purpose of their medicines, 15% were given some, but not enough information and 3% wanted information but were not given any information at all (These figures exclude the 2% of patients who did not want any information about the purpose of their medicines)
- 61% said they were given enough information about any side effects their medicine(s) might have, 20% were given some information, but not enough and 18% wanted information but were not given any information at all (These figures exclude the 11% of patients who were given new prescriptions but didn't want any information about the side effects)

- 87% were given enough information about how to use their new medicine(s) for example, when to take it, how long they should take it for and whether it should be taken with food. However, 10% of patients were not given enough information and 3% said they wanted this information but were not given any (These figures exclude the 2% of patients who were given new prescriptions but did not want any information about how to use the medicines)

Use of pharmacists

Of the patients who responded to the survey 28% said they had asked a pharmacist for advice on medicines during the last 12 months. Of these 73% reported that the pharmacist's advice was definitely helpful, 24% said it had been helpful to some extent, but 2% felt that the pharmacist's advice had not been helpful.

"I very rarely go to my GP since I began full time work because prescriptions are too expensive."

"I do not go to the doctor very much. I go to my chemist if I need medicine for anything."

"The local pharmacist does not offer any counselling advice and offers a poor service."

Health promotion

Almost two thirds of all respondents (63%) reported that their blood pressure had been taken by someone at their GP surgery/local health centre during the last 12 months.

The survey asked patients whether they had been offered a flu jab (influenza vaccination) during the past 12 months. The government target for 2002/03 was 70% uptake of the flu jab amongst patients aged 65 and over. The survey found that 93% of people aged over 65 had been offered a flu jab and 76% had actually had a flu jab in the last 12 months.

The survey also identified several areas where the level of advice given to patients about a healthy lifestyle could be improved:

- 19% of all respondents had tried to get advice or help from their local health services on giving up smoking, but only 13% were given the help they needed
- 4% of all respondents had tried to get advice or help from their local health services on healthy alcohol intake and most were given this help. Fewer than 0.5% said they were not given the help they needed
- 15% of all respondents had tried to get advice or help from their local health services on eating a healthy diet, but only 12% said they were given the help they needed
- 8% of all respondents had tried to get advice or help from their local health services on getting enough exercise, but only 6% said they were given the help they needed

- 27% of all respondents had tried to get advice or help from their local health services on contraception/family planning, and 25% said they were given the help they needed
- 6% of all respondents had tried to get advice or help from their local health services on safer sex, and 5% said they were given the help they needed

Dental services

Over half of all survey respondents (57%) had visited a dentist as an NHS patient within the last 12 months – 42% had seen the dentist within the last six months and 15% had seen the dentist within the last six to 12 months.

A further 9% of respondents had last visited a dentist as an NHS patient between one and two years ago and 26% had last seen an NHS dentist more than two years ago. The remaining 8% of respondents had never visited the dentist as an NHS patient.

The main reasons given by patients for not visiting an NHS dentist in the last 12 months included not being able to find an NHS dentist (19%), they thought that their teeth were alright and they did not need to go (18%), they preferred to use a private dentist (16%), treatment was too expensive, they were afraid of going to the dentist (9%) and they did not think that they were eligible for NHS treatment (7%).

Out of hours dental care

Most people (96%) had not tried to get out of hours dental treatment as an NHS patient during the past 12 months. Of those who had tried (4%), half (2%) reported that they were able to get out of hours treatment as an NHS patient and half (2%) could not get any out of hours treatment under the NHS.

"I had really bad toothache and couldn't get an emergency appointment. I had to book an appointment and eventually was offered one in five weeks. I work full time and need appointments after 5pm for the dentist and doctors. This always seems to be impossible."



Visiting the dentist

Of those patients who had visited the dentist as an NHS patient within the last 12 months, 73% had last attended for a routine check up and 27% were visiting because they had a dental problem.

For 39% of these patients, their appointment was pre booked months in advance, 25% were given an appointment within seven days of contacting the dental surgery, 19% waited one to two weeks, 11% waited three to four weeks and 6% waited more than four weeks for an appointment.

Overall, 84% of those who had seen a dentist as an NHS patient during the past 12 months said that the main reason

for their last visit to the dentist had been dealt with to their complete satisfaction. However, 14% felt their dental treatment had been satisfactory to some extent and 2% did not think that their dental care had been satisfactory.

The survey identified some areas where dental services could be improved:

- 78% of patients had complete confidence and trust in the dentist. But 20% only had confidence and trust to some extent and 3% did not have any confidence and trust in the dentist
- 78% of patients said that staff had definitely done everything they could to help control their pain but 18% said that staff had controlled their pain to some extent and 4% said that staff had not done everything they could to help control their pain (These figures exclude patients who did not experience any pain)
- 85% of patients said that the dentist had explained the reasons for any treatment or action in a way they could understand completely but 13% of patients said they could understand the explanation they were given to some extent, 1% did not understand what they were told and 2% were not given any reasons for their treatment
- 75% of patients said they were definitely involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their dental care and treatment, while 20% said they were involved to some extent and 5% were not involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their dental care

Other health services

Eye tests


Seventy percent of all respondents had had an eye test within the last two years and 30% had an eye test two years ago or longer.

Hearing problems

Eighty eight percent of all respondents did not have any hearing problems, but 12% did have hearing problems, which affected their everyday life. Of those who had hearing problems, 36% said they had definitely been given advice/assistance to help them cope with this problem and 27% said they had been given help to some extent. But 38% of people with hearing problems had not been given any advice or assistance to cope with their difficulties.

Daily activities

Ninety two percent of patients did not have any problems with carrying out their daily activities, but 8% of the survey respondents did have difficulties with daily tasks such as dressing, washing, going to the toilet, moving around their home and cooking a meal. Of those who did have problems with daily living, 40% had definitely been provided with advice to help them cope and 30% had been given advice to some extent. However, 30% of those who had difficulties with carrying out their daily activities had not been given any advice to help them cope with these problems.



"I would like to point out that both my husband and I are disabled and we would like to put on record our grateful thanks for all the help we have received - especially from aids and adaptations, including walking sticks and a disabled extension to our home which has made an enormous difference to our lives over the past two years. Very many thanks to all concerned."

About CHI

What is the Commission for Health Improvement

The Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) was established to improve the quality of patient care in the NHS. It does this by reviewing the care provided by the NHS in England and Wales (Scotland has its own regulatory body, Quality Improvement Scotland, formerly known as the Clinical Standards Board). CHI aims to address unacceptable variations in NHS patient care by identifying both notable practice, and areas where care could be improved. CHI has six operating principles that underpin all of its work:

- the patient's experience is at the heart of CHI's work
- CHI will be independent, rigorous and fair
- CHI's approach is developmental and will support the NHS to continuously improve
- CHI's work will be based on the best available evidence and focus on improvement
- CHI will be open and accessible
- CHI will apply the same standards of continuous improvement to itself that it expects of others

How was the survey undertaken?

Each trust identified a list of patients who were registered with a GP. Staff selected 850 adult patients from the list at random. The sampled patients were sent a questionnaire and a covering letter by post and received up to two reminders.

How was the survey developed?

The questionnaire and survey methods were developed for CHI by the NHS Survey Advice Centre at the Picker Institute Europe, who carried out interviews and focus groups with patients to find out the issues, which patients considered to be most important.

Who took part in the survey?

For the national survey, a total of over 250,000 patients were sampled. Completed questionnaires were received back from 123,833 - a response rate of 49%, after allowing for some patients who proved to be ineligible. Response rates varied among trusts, from 26% to 65%.

Nationally, of all those patients who returned completed questionnaires:

- 41% were men, 59% were women
- 20% were aged 16-35, 25% were aged 36-50, 28% were aged 51-65, 27% were aged 66 or older
- 95% of respondents were White, 2% were Asian or Asian British, 2% were Black or Black British and 1% were either of mixed race or from Chinese or other ethnic groups
- 60% left full time education aged 16 years or less, 19% were aged 17-18 and 17% were aged 19 years or over when they left full time education and 4% were still in full time education
- 25% were the parent or guardian of someone aged under 18 living with them (75% of respondents were not)
- 13% of respondents were looking after or giving special help to someone who is sick, has a disability or is an older person (other than in a professional capacity). Of these, 8% were caring for someone in the respondent's own household and 6% were caring for someone in another household (87% of respondents were not carers)



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