

IMPROVING PATIENTS' EXPERIENCE

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

PATIENT SURVEYS: THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Earlier this year all Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in England surveyed their patients about local health services. These surveys have provided detailed feedback of the experiences of over 123,000 patients.

Many patients have rated aspects of their experience positively. However, more detailed questioning has identified a number of areas of care where there is room for improvement. For example:

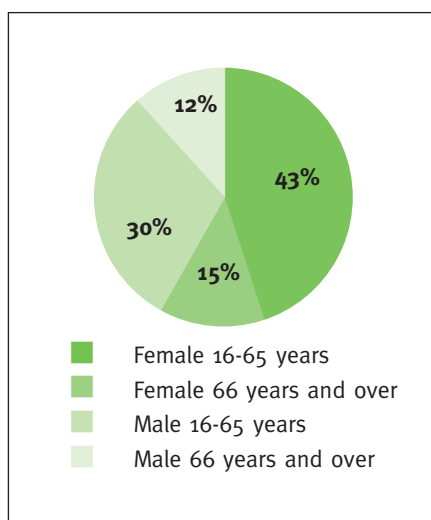
- On arrival at their GP surgery 9 out of 10 patients were not told how long they would have to wait to be seen
- 1 in 3 were not given enough information on the side-effects of their medicines
- 1 in 4 patients were not involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their care and treatment
- 1 in 5 patients did not have enough time to discuss their health at their appointment
- 1 in 6 patients felt that the health professional they saw did not listen to what they had to say
- 1 in 10 did not know how they would find out the results of their tests



Who undertook the surveys?

2003 saw the first national patient survey of services provided by Primary Care Trusts. In England, 304 PCTs took part. National General Practice patient surveys took place in 2002 (145,000 respondents) and 1998 (61,400 respondents).

Who responded to the survey?



Who uses the information from the patient surveys?

The main purpose of the surveys is to provide NHS organisations with detailed patient feedback about the standards of service and care they provide at a local level. This information should be used by NHS staff to help set priorities for quality improvement and to create a more responsive, patient-centred service. As a result of improvement initiatives, future survey results can be used to measure progress.

Patient survey results are also used by the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) to help produce performance indicators. Five of the 2003 performance indicators are derived from the patient survey results.

These indicators are defined as the following domains of patient experience:

- Access & waiting
- Better information, more choice
- Building relationships
- Clean, comfortable, friendly place to be
- Safe, high quality, coordinated care

History of the National NHS Patient Survey Programme

The NHS Plan (2000) declared the government's commitment to ensuring that patients and the public have a real say in how NHS services are planned and developed. The NHS Plan promised that every Trust would carry out a survey of patients' experience of its services on an annual basis. Section 11 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 places a duty on all NHS Trusts to involve and consult

patients and the public.

A series of patient surveys has now been established to obtain detailed patient feedback, which can be used locally to help design quality improvement programmes.

The following surveys have been carried out:

2002

Acute Trusts - Inpatient
Primary Care Trusts - General Practice

2003

Acute Trusts - Outpatients
Acute Trusts - Emergency Department
Primary Care Trusts - Local Health Services

Planned additions to the future programme include mental health, ambulance and children's services, plus a programme of patient surveys linked to each of the National Service Frameworks.

KEY MESSAGES

The 2003 survey has provided detailed feedback about patients' experience of primary care and has highlighted areas for improvement.

Making the Appointment

Almost half of those patients who had to wait for an appointment at their GP surgery were seen within 1 working day. 18% had to wait over a week for an appointment. 46% of patients reported that they had to wait longer for an appointment than they wanted to.

Half of those surveyed have experienced difficulties when trying to get through to their GP surgery by phone.

1 in 5 patients have been put off going to their GP surgery in the last year due to inconvenient opening times. 28% of patients would like their local surgery to be open in the evenings whilst 32% would like it to be open at weekends.

Whilst waiting in the surgery, patients ought to be kept informed about what is happening and why, 89% of patients were not told how long they might have to wait.

Seeing a Health Professional

Over half of those surveyed saw their usual GP, 28% saw another GP at the practice whilst 14% of patients saw another health professional.

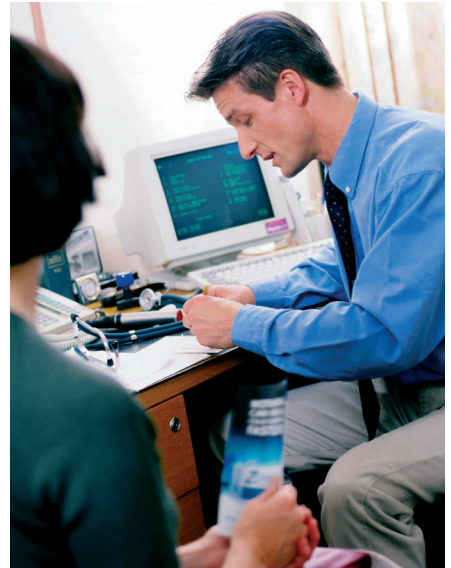
78% of patients reported complete confidence and trust in the health professional they saw but many reported issues around communication which could be improved.

Patients frequently report the need to discuss their concerns with the staff treating them but they did not always have the opportunity to do so.

- 22% of patients who needed to discuss their health or medical problem definitely felt they did not have enough time to do so
- 16% of patients felt that the health professional they saw did not definitely listen to all they had to say
- 15% of patients felt that the health professional they saw did not know enough about their condition or treatment
- 12% of those who needed to discuss emotional issues that might be affecting their health were not able to do so
- 13% of those who needed to discuss aspects of their family or living situation that might be affecting their health were not able to do so

“I found it easy to talk to the nurse about what I wanted and I was treated with respect. I was also given information leaflets which were useful and easy to understand.”

Providing patients with basic information can help to alleviate anxieties and fears. It also helps to equip them to make informed choices about their care and treatment. The survey highlights that there are some gaps in information provided to patients.



1 in 4 of those who needed an understandable explanation of the reasons for any treatment or action did not get one. 1 in 5 of those patients who had questions to ask during their appointment did not get answers they could definitely understand although 99% of patients did get the opportunity to ask questions.

93% of patients felt that they were always treated with respect and dignity by the health professional they saw.

“My GP is very understanding and treats me as a friend.”

Tests

Tests can form a significant part of an appointment but many patients were not aware of why tests were performed or what the results might mean.



56% of the patients questioned had tests during their appointment to help find out more about their condition.

Before the appointment

Privacy is an extremely important issue for patients but 84% of them reported that they could be overheard by others whilst in the reception area of the surgery.

“I would like more privacy when talking to the receptionist about personal details.”

62% of patients rated the courtesy of the receptionist as either excellent or very good whilst 14% of them reported the level of courtesy as fair or poor.

70% of patients were seen within 15 minutes of their appointment time but 8% waited for more than half an hour.



Results show that:

- Staff had not completely explained the purpose of tests to 18% of patients
- 10% of patients did not know how they would find out the results of their tests
- 10% of patients did not know when they would find out their test results
- 75% of patients received their test results on time or early
- 5% of patients never received their test results

Referrals

Almost half of the patients surveyed were referred to see another health professional about their condition. Just over one quarter of them were given a choice about where they were referred to.

More than half of them felt that the health professional they were referred to definitely had all the necessary information about them and their condition and treatment.



Treatment

The provision of information regarding treatment is a crucial aspect of good patient care. The survey results help to identify some of the problems to be addressed.

46% of patients reported that they were prescribed new medicines at their last appointment, 45% of them were not involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their medication.

“I want to have more time with my GP. I would like a better explanation of my condition and the possible side-effects of my treatments.”

Of those patients who wanted information:

- 82% were not given enough information about the purpose of their medications
- 3% were given no information at all about the purpose of their medication
- 39% did not get enough information on the side-effects of their medications
- 13% were not given enough information on how to take their medications

Just over half of those questioned had been taking prescribed medication for more than 12 months. Three quarters of them reported that their medication had been reviewed by someone at their GP Surgery.

OUT OF HOURS CARE

18% of patients reported that they have tried to contact their GP surgery outside of normal opening hours. 70% of those who called got through to someone within minutes, 15% were unable to get through to anyone at all.

84% of them said that the reasons for their call had, to some extent, been dealt with satisfactorily.

Almost three quarters of patients have heard of NHS Direct, one quarter of them have actually used the service.

YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL HEALTH SERVICES

In 2001 all PCTs were required to produce and deliver ‘Your Guide to Local Health Services’ (Patient Prospectus) to their local population. This leaflet was designed to provide information on local NHS services and how to access them.

Only 1 in 4 respondents reported receiving a copy of ‘Your Guide to Local Health Services’. 87% of those who received the leaflet found it useful.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE GENERAL PRACTICE 2002 SURVEY

The 2002 Survey of General Practice repeated a survey among patients of general practice carried out in 1998. The key findings of the 2002 survey indicated that, in the great majority of aspects of primary care, patient reports were largely unchanged from 1998.

- 16% of patients reported that they had been put off going to see their doctor at least once in the last year because of inconvenient surgery hours
- 59% of patients were seen within 15 minutes of their appointment time
- 78% of patients considered that receptionists were helpful always or most of the time
- 5% of patients felt that their GP had not always treated them with courtesy and respect
- 9% of patients reported that their GP did not listen to them all or most of the time.
- 17% of patients felt that their GP did not know enough about their condition or treatment
- Of those who asked questions of their GP, 19% said that not all of their questions were answered

More results from the 2002 GP Survey can be found at:
<http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/gpsurveyindex.htm>

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESULTS

There are a number of ways that you can look at your survey results to help you proceed with quality improvement activities:

1. Compare your results with other Trusts and identify areas where you are significantly better or worse than others. Are there some questions where you have scored significantly below the best performing Trusts? (see *benchmark charts below*)
2. Identify questions where most patients have reported room for improvement.
3. Identify particular aspects of the patient journey where many patients report problems
4. Identify areas where work is already underway and solutions can be easily identified and implemented by staff and patients

SHARING YOUR RESULTS

Survey results should be widely shared if they are to play a significant role in quality improvement work. A well planned dissemination strategy will ensure you engage:

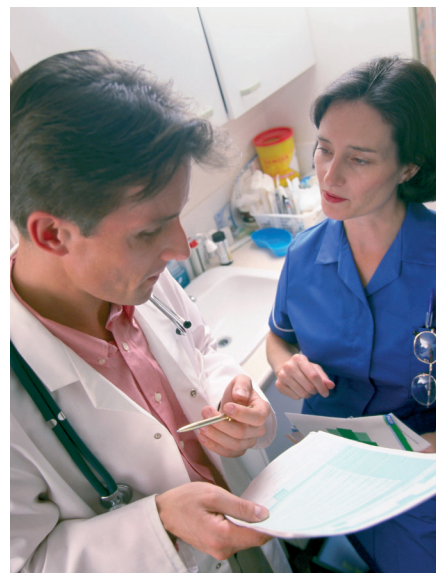
- Board members
- Patients Forum
- Staff
- Patients and the public

There are a number of ways in which the survey results can be effectively communicated:

- Establish a group to coordinate the work of dissemination and action planning, make sure some dynamic individuals are involved
- Make presentations of the results to your Trust board and as many groups of staff and patients as possible, ensure the presentations are tailored appropriately for each audience
- Hold a high profile local event with patients and staff to kick start improvement plans
- Produce visual displays and posters to publicise the results in a user friendly way throughout your organisation
- Publish results widely in local media, Trust publications and websites along with details of how the information will be used to improve the patient experience
- Illustrate themes with patient comments and other forms of patient feedback to put the results in context

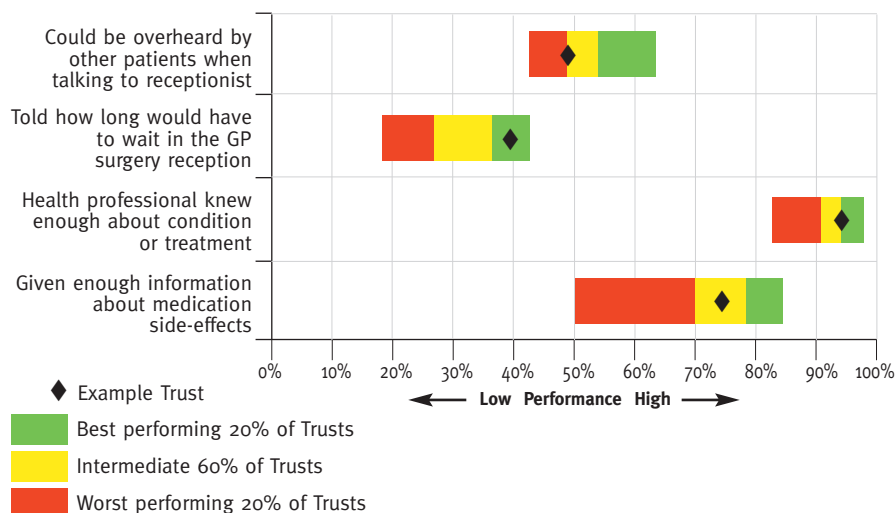
USING YOUR RESULTS

Survey results are an important tool in identifying priorities for quality improvement. To ensure they are used effectively:



- Engage patients and staff from across the organisation in quality initiatives from the beginning
- Focus on a couple of key themes initially - don't try to tackle everything at once
- Identify areas where problems are reported and follow patients through this part of their experience
- Publish regular progress reports widely throughout the Trust and the local area
- Resurvey to monitor any improvements

Benchmark Chart for Local Health Services Survey



WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Advice Centre for the National Survey Programme: www.nhssurveys.org

Results and Information on 2003 Patient Surveys: <http://www.chi.nhs.uk/eng/surveys/index.shtml>

Results from the 2002 GP Survey: <http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/gpsurveyindex.htm>

2003 Performance Indicators & Star Ratings: www.ratings.chi.nhs.uk