

IMPROVING PATIENTS' EXPERIENCE

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

PATIENT SURVEYS: THE NATIONAL PICTURE

The largest ever surveys of emergency department patients and outpatients has taken place. These surveys have provided detailed feedback of the experiences of over 90,000 outpatients and more than 59,000 emergency department patients.

Many patients have rated their overall experience positively with 78% of outpatients and 67% of emergency department patients reporting the care they received as either excellent or very good. However, more detailed questioning has identified a number of areas of care where there is room for improvement. For example:

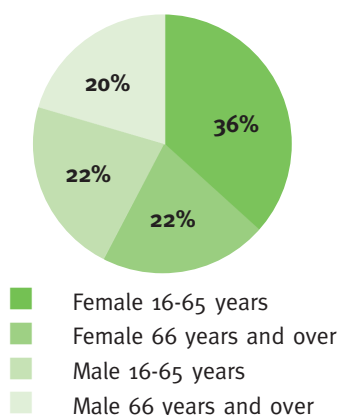
- More than half of emergency department patients were not told how long they would have to wait to see a doctor or nurse practitioner
- 1 in 3 emergency department patients were not given a complete and understandable explanation of their condition and treatment
- 1 in 4 patients felt they were not always treated with respect and dignity during their visit to the emergency department
- 1 in 10 emergency department patients were given no information at all about their condition or treatment
- 1 in 3 outpatients were not as involved in decisions about their care and treatment as they wanted to be
- 1 in 6 outpatients were not aware of the reason for their appointment
- 1 in 10 outpatients felt that staff had talked in front of them as if they weren't there

Who undertook the surveys?

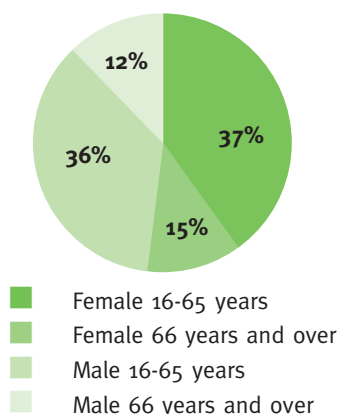
In 2003, NHS Acute Trusts in England undertook patient surveys in outpatients and emergency departments. 171 Trusts were involved in the outpatient survey and 155 Trusts took part in the emergency department survey.

Who responded to the survey?

Outpatients



Emergency patients



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

Two thirds of patients rated their care in the emergency department as excellent or very good. Further questioning provided detailed feedback about their experience and has highlighted areas for improvement.

Arriving at the emergency department

On arrival at the emergency department 39% of patients were seen and assessed by a triage nurse within 15 minutes but 7% of patients had to wait over an hour for this assessment. A further 18% did not have to wait to be assessed but were seen by a doctor or nurse practitioner straight away.

Most patients were seen by a doctor or nurse practitioner within 4 hours but 58% of patients were not told how long they might have to wait.

“All the staff were nice and friendly, even whilst working under pressure”

Seeing a Doctor or Nurse

Three quarters of patients reported complete confidence in the doctors and nurses examining them but many reported some issues around communication which could be improved.

- 51% of patients with anxieties and fears felt that they had not been able to completely discuss their concerns with a member of staff

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.



One third of patients did not receive a complete and understandable explanation about their condition or treatment. 15% of patients felt they were not given enough information and 9% were given no information at all.

Privacy is also an extremely important issue for patients but 1 in 5 did not feel they had enough privacy when they were examined or treated and nearly 1 in 3 did not have enough privacy when discussing their condition or treatment.

“There should be more privacy at the arrival desk, it's embarrassing to discuss personal details in front of those in the waiting area”

Tests and Treatment

56% of patients had tests during their visit to the emergency department. Tests were performed within 15 minutes for 41% of these patients but 9% of them had to wait more than 2 hours. Two thirds of patients felt their test results were explained in an



understandable way but 9% had no understanding of them and 3% did not actually receive their test results.

Most patients expect to experience pain during their time in hospital, it is however important that this pain is managed effectively.

- 2 out of 3 patients reported that they were in pain all or most of the time during their visit to the emergency department
- 1 in 3 patients who experienced pain requested medication for it
- 1 in 5 received the pain medication they asked for immediately, 1 in 10 never received the pain relief they requested
- 1 in 5 patients did not feel that staff had done all they could to help them control their pain

“The staff nurse and doctor who saw me were brilliant, I will remember their kindness always”

Leaving the emergency department

Leaving a hospital can be just as daunting as entering one and patients should be given information to help them recover at home.

37% of patients were prescribed new medications before leaving the emergency department. 17% of these patients needed an understandable explanation of the purpose of their new medications but did not get one. 50% of those who needed information on medication side-effects did not get such an explanation.

One third of patients who required information on danger signals regarding their condition and treatment were not told what to look for when they got home. 1 in 6 were not told who to contact if they became worried about their condition when they left the hospital.

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:

- 37% of patients definitely felt that they did not have enough time to discuss their medical problem with the doctor or nurse
- 4% of patients felt that the doctors and nurses hadn't listened to what they had to say
- 10% of patients felt that staff were deliberately not telling them certain things they wanted to know

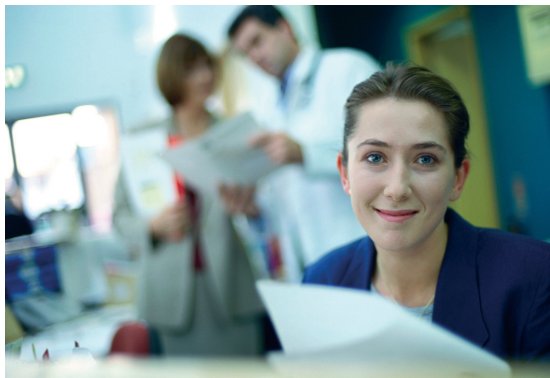


KEY MESSAGES

Over three quarters of patients rated the overall care they received at outpatients as excellent or very good. Further questioning provided detailed feedback about their experience and has highlighted areas for improvement.

Before the appointment

Results indicate that many patients are not very well informed before their appointment takes place. 21% of those surveyed did not know who to contact if their symptoms or condition worsened before their appointment. 16% of patients were not completely sure of the reason behind their appointment.



On arrival at hospital patients should be kept informed about what is happening and why. Almost half of patients were seen within 15 minutes of their appointment time but 1 in 10 had to wait over an hour to be seen.

Two thirds of patients were given no information at all about how long they would be waiting and three quarters of patients were not told the reasons why they had to wait.

The appointment

When asked about their appointment just over 80% of patients definitely had confidence and trust in the doctor or health professional treating them. Only 2% stated the exact opposite, that they had no confidence and trust in them whatsoever.

Almost three quarters of patients felt they definitely had enough time to discuss their medical problem with their doctor however 1 in 5 were not convinced that the doctor had listened to all they had to say. 1 in 10 felt their doctor was deliberately not telling them things they wanted to know.

Of those who had important questions to ask their doctor 69% felt that the doctor had definitely given them answers they could understand. 3% did not get understandable answers at all and a further 2% did not get the opportunity to ask such questions.

“My doctor explained about my condition and treatment in great detail. In all my visits he has been very helpful. He made me feel at ease about my condition”

Tests

Tests can take up a large part of the time in outpatients but many patients are not aware of why they have tests or what the results may mean. 61% of patients questioned had tests during their outpatient appointment to help find out more about their condition.

Results show that

- Staff had not completely explained the need for tests to 28% of patients
- 21% of patients did not know how they would find out their test results
- 9% of patients did not receive an understandable explanation of their test results
- 5% of patients were never told their test results

“I have never had any contact about the results of my tests. I feel totally ignored and let down. I had expected some kind of follow up appointment to discuss the results and any necessary treatment but I have heard nothing”

Treatment

Communication of information regarding illness and treatment is an important aspect of patient care. The survey helps to identify some of the problems to be addressed.

30% of patients felt they were not definitely involved in decisions about their care and treatment as much as they

wanted to be. 12% felt that overall they were not given enough information about their condition or treatment in outpatients and a further 7% reported that they received no information at all.



29% of patients underwent treatment during their appointment and three quarters of them were certain that staff had explained what would happen. Almost one third said they had not received a completely understandable explanation of any risks and benefits.

Medication can form an essential part of any treatment plan and patients should be well informed on how to take any prescribed medicines correctly.

- 14% of those patients who needed information on how to take medications were not given a complete explanation
- 18% of those who needed to know why they were taking new medications had not received a full explanation from staff
- 39% of patients who needed to know about any medication side-effects received no information about this

After the appointment

Leaving the appointment can be a worrying time for patients but one third of those patients who felt they needed information about danger signals to look for at home were not given this type of information. 12% of those questioned were not told who to contact if they became worried about their condition or treatment when they got home.

13% of patients left their appointment feeling that they were not always treated with respect and dignity.

NEXT STEPS

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:

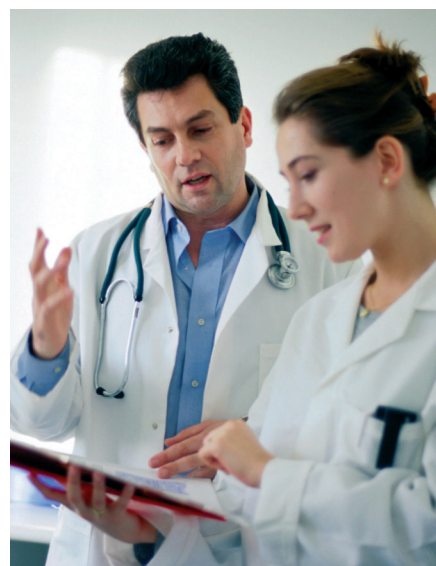
- Board members
- Patients Forum
- Staff
- Patients and the public

There are a number of ways in which your 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

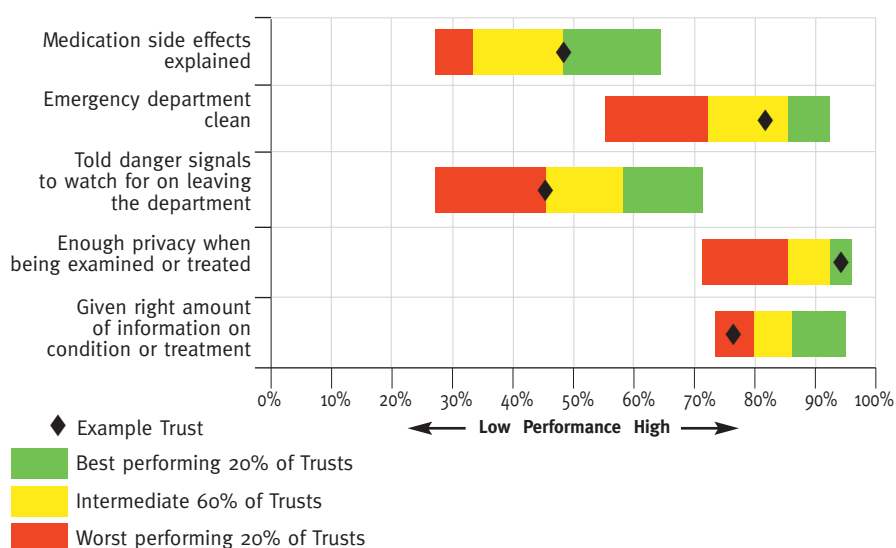
USING YOUR RESULTS

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 Emergency Department 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 Inpatient Survey: <http://www.doh.gov.uk/acuteinpatientsurvey/index.htm>

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