

ARTÍCULO DE ORIGINAL

Satisfacción de los pacientes con el cuidado brindado en el departamento de dermatología de una clínica universitaria

Patient Satisfaction with the Care Provided at the Dermatology Department in a University Clinic / Satisfação dos pacientes com o cuidado brindado no Departamento de Dermatologia de uma clínica universitária

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Victoria Lucía Dávila Osorio¹

RESUMEN

Objetivo: evaluar la satisfacción de los pacientes con la atención prestada en el Departamento de Dermatología de una clínica universitaria, en el que estudiantes de medicina y residentes hacen parte de la consulta de dermatología.

Metodología: estudio descriptivo. Se aplicó una encuesta para evaluar la satisfacción de los pacientes que atendieron a la consulta dermatológica de una clínica universitaria con la atención brindada desde la recepcionista hasta el médico dermatólogo tratante, incluidos el residente y las enfermeras, entre marzo y abril de 2013.

Resultados: se aplicaron un total de 204 encuestas. La experiencia general fue excelente en el 83.8% de los pacientes, muy buena 13.7%, buena 2% y regular en 0.5%. En ninguna de las categorías evaluadas fue calificada la atención como mala.

Conclusiones: la mayoría de los estudios realizados en clínicas dermatológicas demuestra altos grados de satisfacción de los pacientes con la atención. Esto se convierte en un reto aún mayor para las clínicas dermatológicas, en cuanto a competitividad y cumplimiento de expectativas de los pacientes. Puntuaciones regulares o buenas no son suficientes para ser competitivos en el mercado dermatológico.

Palabras clave: calidad de la atención de salud; internado y residencia; dermatología.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To evaluate patient satisfaction regarding the care provided at the Department of Dermatology in an academic dermatology clinic, where medical students and resident physicians are part of the dermatology consultation.

Methodology: Descriptive study. A survey was conducted to evaluate patient satisfaction with the care provided (from the receptionist to the physician, including residents and nurses) for patients cared for at a dermatological outpatient facility of a university clinic from March to April of 2013.

Results: A total of 204 surveys were applied. The overall experience was excellent for 83.82% of the patients, very good for 13.7%, good for 2% and fair for 0.5%. None of the categories received poor ratings.

Conclusions: Nearly all studies performed in dermatology clinics receive very high patient satisfaction ratings. This poses a great challenge for dermatological outpatient facilities if they want to be competitive and meet patient expectations. Fair or good scores are not enough to remain competitive in the dermatology market.

Keywords: Quality of health care; internship and residency; dermatology.

1. MD Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Medellín Antioquia, Colombia.

Dirección de correspondencia:
victorialucia.davila@upb.edu.co

RESUMO

Objetivo: avaliar a satisfação dos pacientes com a atenção prestada no Departamento de Dermatologia de uma clínica universitária, no que estudantes de medicina e residentes fazem parte da consulta de dermatologia.

Metodologia: estudo descritivo. Se aplicou uma enquete para avaliar a satisfação dos pacientes que foram à consulta dermatológica de uma clínica universitária com a atenção brindada desde a recepcionista até o médico dermatologista tratante, incluídos o residente e as enfermeiras, entre março e abril de 2013.

Resultados: se aplicaram um total de 204 enquetes. A experiência geral foi excelente em 83.8% dos pacientes, muito boa 13.7%, boa 2% e regular em 0.5%. Em nenhuma das categorias avaliadas foi qualificada a atenção como má.

Conclusões: a maioria dos estudos realizados em clínicas dermatológicas demonstra altos graus de satisfação dos pacientes com a atenção. Este se converte num objetivo ainda maior para as clínicas dermatológicas, enquanto a competitividade e cumprimento de expectativas dos pacientes. Pontuações regulares ou boas não são suficientes para ser competitivos no mercado dermatológico.

Palavras chave: controle de qualidade; internato e residência; dermatologia.

INTRODUCTION

Patient satisfaction is a key factor when measuring the quality of health care in any facility¹. If patients are dissatisfied, the goal of providing a quality care would not be achieved². Good quality care also leads to a number of benefits to the health industry as well as for the clinical outcome of patients. It improves patient maintenance, increases patients' loyalty, reduces the risk of malpractice claims, makes patients less vulnerable to "price wars", as well as increases the perception of competence of the physician³. In the dermatology setting, where skin diseases usually require long-term treatment, regular follow-up visits, and where patients have high cure expectations for their skin disease, it is particularly important to find a way to ensure patient satisfaction with the care given, so they would have a better adherence to their treatments which would contribute to the improvement of their skin health. Highly satisfied patients have better outcomes of their chronic diseases than those who are poorly satisfied⁴.

Different studies have shown that doctor-patient interaction is perhaps the most important indicator to determine patient satisfaction. Patients expect their doctors to be punctual, behave cordially,

and communicate in appropriate language. They expect care, concern, and courtesy, in addition to highly qualified professionals who provide adequate answers to their questions, empathy, and successful treatments⁵. The main complaints that lead patients to dissatisfaction are: the time required to schedule an appointment, the information received regarding their problem, the waiting time at the doctor's office, the physician's personal style, and difficulty to understand the medical vocabulary, among others⁶.

The participation of residents and medical students in patient care is thought to be associated with inefficiencies and inconveniences for the patient, possibly leading to dissatisfaction with the care provided. Resident physicians may not have enough experience with the electronic clinical chart system, or with referral and prescribing procedures. They may be worried about protocols, diagnosis or treatment decisions, which may lead them to a worse physician-patient interaction and to a delay in appointment scheduling, therefore leading to patient dissatisfaction^{7,8}. The current study aims to evaluate patient satisfaction in an academic dermatology clinic, where medical students and resident physicians are part of outpatient dermatological care.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study in which a survey evaluating patient satisfaction regarding the care received (from receptionists to attending physicians) was given to patients receiving care at an academic dermatology clinic (MCW Dermatology Clinic). All patients who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study from March through April of 2013 were assessed using this survey. The survey consisted of six multiple choice questions evaluating the following items: first time or follow-up patient, the care given by the receptionist, the medical assistant, the resident physician, the attending physician, and the overall experience. Each item could be rated as poor, fair, good, very good, or excellent (scored 1 to 5). The collected data was entered and analyzed using an Excel database. Frequencies and percentages of answers, and mean scores for new (first time) and old (follow-up) patients were reported.

RESULTS

Of the 204 surveys applied, 152 were follow-up patients, corresponding to 74.5% of the surveys applied, while 52 were new patients, corresponding to 25.4% of

the surveys. Regarding satisfaction with the receptionists, 79.9% of the patients rated it as excellent, 17.1% considered it very good, and 3%, good. Care provided by medical assistants was rated as excellent by 78.9% of patients, very good by 19.6%, and good by 1.5%. Resident physicians received scores of excellent by 87.7% of patients, very good by 10.3%, and good by 2%. Attending physicians were rated as excellent by 88.7% of patients, very good by 10.3%, and good by 1%.

The overall experience was rated as excellent by 83.8% of the patients; 13.7% rated it as very good, 2% as good, and 0.5% as fair. None of the categories received a lower rating.

Although the survey did not include open questions, three of the participants wrote comments indicating that the waiting time was too long. In one of these cases, the long wait affected the overall score. Further statistical analysis was not possible because no demographic information was collected in the survey. Tables 1 and 2 show the results of the survey.

Patients cared for at the clinic for the first time (new) were more satisfied with the receptionists, the resident physician, and overall experience than follow-up patients (established), who were more satisfied with the care given by attending physicians. See Figure 1 for comparison of new and follow-up patient satisfaction.

Table 1. General results of the survey. Values are expressed in frequencies and (percentages).

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Receptionist	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (3)	35 (17)	163 (79)
Medical assistant	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (1.5)	40 (19.6)	161 (78.9)
Resident physician	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (2)	21 (10.3)	179 (87.7)
Attending physician	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1)	21 (10.3)	181 (88.7)
Overall experience	0 (0)	1 (0.5)	4 (2)	28 (13.7)	171 (83.8)

Table 2. Scores for the perceived quality of care, according to a survey applied to 206 participants of whom 52 (25.4%) were first-time patients and 152 (74.5%) were follow-up patients.

	Mean ±SD
Receptionist	4.77 ± 0.48
Medical Assistant	4.78 ± 0.45
Resident Physician	4.86 ± 0.40
Attending Physician	4.88 ± 0.35
Overall Experience	4.81 ± 0.47

SD: Standard deviation.

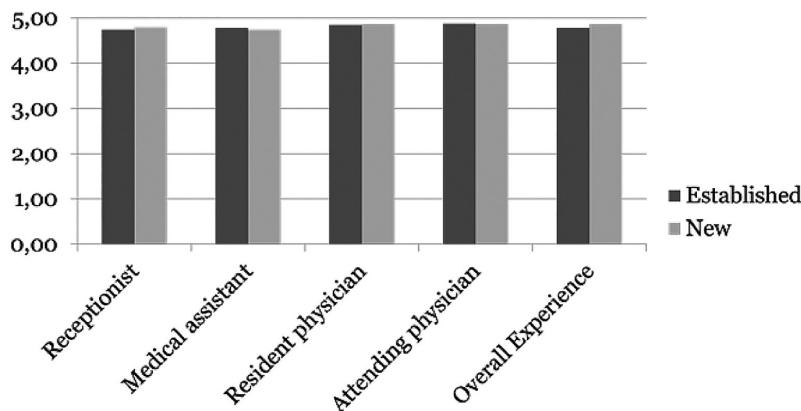


Figure 1. Satisfaction perceived by the patients.

DISCUSSION

In general, there is a high overall patient satisfaction with the care given at the MCW Dermatology Clinic. This is a good result, but improvements need to be made in order to achieve 100% satisfaction, which should be the goal of every clinic in order to improve and provide quality care. Similar results have been found in studies performed in similar facilities. A study performed in the dermatology outpatient clinics in the University of Pennsylvania in 2005 shows surprising findings regarding patient satisfaction with care given; here, 99.5% of the patients were satisfied with the care provided by the resident physician and 93.2% had had a good experience in the past with the resident⁹. A study from the University of Wake Forest showed that patients felt comfortable with almost all the resident physicians. Six residents were evaluated with a mean score of 9.7/10¹⁰. In our study, 100% of the patients were satisfied with the care given by the residents (good, very good, or excellent scores), with a mean rating of 4.86 out of 5.

A study performed by Poulos *et al.*, using data from the Dr. Score patient satisfaction surveys for dermatology office visits from 35 states in the United States (a total of 394 surveys), reported that the quality of the care perceived received scores of 9 or 10 in about 58%-74% of the participants⁴. Higher scores were found in our study, where 99% of the attending physicians were scored between 4 and 5 out of 5.

On the contrary, in a study performed by Yancy *et al.*, in four outpatient facilities at a university teaching hospital and at the VA hospital, patients seen by resident physicians were less satisfied than those seen

by the attending physicians⁷. In our study, patients seen by residents and attending physicians did not have significant differences in their scores, with a mean of 4.86 and 4.88 out of 5, respectively.

In conclusion, most studies performed in dermatology clinics have shown high rates of patient satisfaction. These results imply a challenge when trying to improve the quality of patient care, also taking into account patient expectations regarding the care given in dermatology clinics. Fair or good scores will not suffice to be competitive in the dermatology market.

It is necessary to make improvements regarding the wait time at the doctor's office, which was the main reason for the lower overall scores in our study and in other studies reported.

Short surveys are well received by patients and are an appropriate tool to identify areas that require improvement in health care facilities. They should be implemented to improve quality of care and patient satisfaction.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I certify I have not received any funding or financial support in preparing this publication and have no commercial association or financial interest that conflict with this article. Rotating medical student at the Dermatology Clinic at Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital/Medical College of Wisconsin (March-April 2013)

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