

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is investigation of patient satisfaction as effect of perceived quality of hospital care services and hospital organizational factors. The main reasons for the study are monitoring and marketing quality of hospital care services.

Health care services is that component of the health care system which comprises the practitioners and organizations that provide care. Quality of health care services as perceived by the consumer is quality in the context of his total experience. It has two components: technical aspects such as quality of equipment, and non-technical ones such as friendliness of staff. The provision of health care services in India has largely been a government responsibility. Skewed need-supply ratios are an indicator of a sellers' market in provision of these services. Consequently, providers' emphasis on technical aspects has downplayed the patient's perception of experienced quality of care. As such, patient satisfaction was not a prominent concern in the Indian context. This hitherto minimal issue was given relevance by the entry of a conceptually different entity, the corporate hospital, into the hospital sector in the last decade.

The segment served by corporate market may be the nearest to a buyer's market that there is in India. The issue of Service Quality is perhaps peculiarly relevant to this segment. It follows that quality of health care services as perceived by the patient should incorporate both the technical and non-technical dimensions of care.

Structural attributes such as quality of equipment of the health care services provider are thought to indicate the likelihood of delivery of good quality service: they become indirect measures of the quality of care.

The design of the study involved (i) survey, (ii) semi-structured interviews; across two levels of the organization: employees (administrative and medical staff), and consumers. Four corporate hospitals located in and around a metropolitan city comprised the sample.

This study found leadership styles to be similarly democratic across the group of corporate hospitals. Age and size of hospital did not have demonstrated effects on organizational dimensions. Organizational dimensions were influential precursors of perceived service quality. Service quality did not directly predict patient satisfaction.

The closest relationships between organizational dimensions and dimensions of perceived service quality were

- * consistency of expectations from employees, sense of pride in the hospital, future orientation and service orientation, and reliability of service
- * personal dimensions of service orientation and responsiveness of employees
- * service orientation with knowledge, courtesy and ability of employees to inspire trust and confidence.

Satisfaction was not closely related to dimensions of quality, which appeared to confirm it as a transaction-specific concept. It was related more to non-technical than to technical aspects. Customer perceptions of perceived quality were linked to employee perception of organizational- and job-related practices and procedures. The gap between these perceptions appeared to confirm the gap that was found to exist between consumer experience and provider perception of consumer experience.