

## PATIENT SATISFACTION WITH HEALTH CARE DELIVERY: A SURVEY OF WARDS & UNITS IN A PUBLIC HOSPITAL IN BAYELSA STATE.

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### Abstract

**Background:** Patient satisfaction has become the buzz-word in measuring hospital performance; it is now at the core of service delivery, demanding attention.

**Objective:** To investigate the level of patients' satisfaction with health care services in a public hospital in Bayelsa State and make recommendations where necessary.

**Materials and Methods:** The study was a descriptive survey. It adopted self-developed questionnaire to elicit responses from a sample of 60 patients drawn from five wards/units of the hospital – 20 from Obstetrics & Gynaecology Ward, 10 from Medical Outpatient Department, 10 from General Outpatient Department, 10 from Surgical Outpatient Department while the remaining 10 from Accident & Emergency Department. Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using percentages.

**Results:** Majority of respondents (77%) reported general satisfaction on the care they received. On technical quality, 66% agreed that doctors exhibit professional skills and comportment while delivering services. On communication between nurses, doctors and patients, 65% reported satisfaction. On duration of time doctors spent attending to patients, 60% were satisfied. Thus, patients reported above-average satisfaction in the study. However, factors such as workshop and seminars for care providers on the importance of patients' satisfaction, monitoring of staff behaviour and provision of hospital equipment, adequate power and water supply as well as essential drugs required due attention to boost level of satisfaction.

**Key Words:** Patient satisfaction, healthcare service, professional skills.

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### INTRODUCTION

The health sector is one of the most intrinsic parts of any economic development of a country. A healthy economy is achieved when citizens are in good state of health mentally, physically, socially, emotionally and otherwise, and improving the health of a nation's citizens can and will directly

result in economic growth. Thus, 50% of poor economic growth is attributed to poor health and low life expectancy; the healthier the citizenry of a country, the more effective the workforce<sup>1</sup>. Nations within and around the world establish health institutions and structures that would aid its citizenry in assessing good health facility either at a higher cost or subsidised rate, e.g. through the

Health Insurance Scheme<sup>2</sup>. Patient satisfaction is thus important to health care delivery<sup>3</sup>.

According to National Institute of Health, patient satisfaction is an important and commonly used indicator for measuring quality in health care<sup>4</sup>; it affects clinical outcomes, patient retention and medical malpractice claims; it affects the timely, efficient, and patient centred delivery of quality health care, and it measures the extent to which a patient is content with the health care that they receive from health care provider<sup>4, 5</sup>. Thus, it is increasingly becoming the buzz-word for community that involves itself in the provision of health care services, and are involved in research projects to discover new and better ways of improving the growth and care to the patient.

Patient satisfaction has been identified as a tool now being used for getting information that would enhance identification of gaps within health organization as well as a function of personal preferences and expectations on healthcare service for the patient<sup>6, 7</sup>. Satisfaction is derivable when there is alignment between patients' perspective on what constitutes satisfaction in healthcare and the providers' view, while interpersonal aspect of care plays very important role in determining satisfaction that patients derive from care<sup>8,9</sup>. Patient satisfaction has by definition, centred around compassion, empathy and responsiveness to needs, values and expressed preferences, information communication and education, emotional support, and relief from fear and anxiety<sup>10</sup>.

It has been found that patients' overall hospital rating and willingness to recommend a hospital had "strong relationship with technical performance in all medical condition and surgical care"<sup>11</sup>. A study carried out in a healthcare institution in Serbia showed that workers' satisfaction has an effect on patient satisfaction as it has a great impact on quality, effectiveness and commitment to work and at the same time on health care costs<sup>12</sup>. The survey revealed statistically significant correlation that job satisfaction juxtaposed with level of patient

satisfaction in health facilities ( $p=0.012$ ). It is also discovered that expectation and efficiency of services received are the most important factors for patient satisfaction and such include waiting time, time spent during consultation, communication with patient and quality of treatment given to patient<sup>13</sup>. Conversely, poor infrastructures, irregular electricity, poor and inadequate water supply and out of stock of essential drugs mostly cause patient dissatisfaction<sup>14</sup>.

A research on patient satisfaction and quality of care in a tertiary institution in South East, Nigeria found that 38% of the respondents were satisfied with the services rendered by the doctors by such parameters as waiting time and treatment information<sup>15</sup>. Thus, it is posited that healthcare services should meet the clinical needs of patients and ensure respect for patients' prompt attention, quality of amenities and choice of provider<sup>16</sup>.

A research carried out in Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital revealed high satisfaction of patient in the area of communication, time spent, and cost of service and health facilities<sup>17</sup>. The findings showed 90% of respondents were satisfied about the communication between doctors and patients while 10% were dissatisfied. In time spent, 70% of the respondents were satisfied with waiting time, while 30% were not. The health facilities and environment were also rated by the respondents; 87% were satisfied while 13% were dissatisfied. In evaluating health care quality, patient satisfaction is a performance indicator measured in a self-report study and a specific type of customer satisfaction metric. However, there are circumstances in which patient satisfaction is not a valid indicator of health care quality even though it is often used as such. Many studies have failed to identify a relationship between patient satisfaction and health care quality. Patient satisfaction in health care services is mainly dependent on the duration and efficiency of care, and how empathetic and communicative the health care providers are. It is favoured by a good doctor-patient relationship. Patients who are well informed of necessary procedures in a clinical encounter, and the time it is expected to take, are generally more satisfied even if there is a longer

waiting time. Another critical factor influencing patient satisfaction is the job satisfaction experienced by the care provider.

Now, who is a patient? A patient is described to be someone who is receiving [medical treatment](#) from a [doctor](#) or in a [hospital](#)<sup>18</sup>. The patient is not dependent on the health facility rather the health facility is dependent on the patient who is the customer<sup>19</sup>. In sum, a patient is any recipient of health care services whose satisfaction determines the performance of the hospital.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To investigate the level of patient satisfaction with healthcare services they receive in a public hospital in Bayelsa State and make recommendations where necessary.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Primary data were the basis for this study. The data were sourced using self-developed questionnaire administered to patients in various wards/units of the hospital. Quantitative analysis was adopted using descriptive statistics with simple percentages. The design was a descriptive survey relative to the relationships between patients and medical cum nursing personnel in order to assess the satisfaction of the patient in health facility.

The respondents comprised 60 patients drawn from five wards/units of the hospital- 20 from Obstetrics and Gynaecology Ward, 10 from Medical Outpatient Department, 10 from General Outpatient Department, 10 from Surgical Outpatient Department and 10 from Accident & Emergency Department.

The study instrument was developed from the literature; pre-tested and modified accordingly. The first set of questions were on demographic characteristics of the respondents while the other section centred on 'general satisfaction on healthcare', 'technical quality', 'communication', 'cost of healthcare' and 'time spent with doctors and nurses'. Respondents had options of 'agree', or 'disagree'.

## RESULTS:

**Table 1. General Satisfaction (n = 60)**

S/N	Parameters	No of responses				
		Agree	%	Disagree	%	Total %
1	I'm satisfied with the way I am attended to	51	85%	9	15%	100
2	I am easily given attention when I come for medical care	37	62%	23	38%	100
3	During my medical visits, I am allowed to say everything about my medical condition	54	90%	6	10%	100
4	Basic things like drugs & water supplies, toilets and general environment need to be improved	42	70%	18	30%	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2. Technical quality (n = 60)**

S/N	Parameters	No of responses				
		Agree	%	Disagree	%	Total %
1	Doctors are good about explaining the reason for medical test	53	88%	7	12%	100
2	I think my doctor's office has what it takes to provide good quality medical care	18	30%	42	70%	100
3	When I come for medical care, they are careful to check everything when treating and examining me	53	88%	7	12%	100
4	It's hard to get medical care attention if one does not come very early to the facility	35	58%	25	42%	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3 communication between doctors, nurses and patients (n = 60)**

S/N	Parameters	No of responses				
		Agree	%	Disagree	%	Total %
1	Sometimes doctors use medical terms without explaining what they mean.	22	37%	38	63%	100
2	My doctors treat me in a very friendly and courteous manner	47	78%	13	22%	100
3	I am impressed with the attention that nurses pay to my health during observation	44	73%	16	27%	100
4	Nurses show care and compassion when attending to me	43	72%	17	28%	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4 financial consideration by patients (n = 60)**

Parameters		No of responses				
S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Total %
1	I pay more for my medical care than I had expected	23	38%	37	62%	100
2	I think the amount being charged for medical care here is reasonable	42	70%	18	30%	100
3	I worry sometimes about having to pay large medical bills	27	45%	33	55%	100
4	I feel confident that when I pay, I can receive the type of medical care I need	40	67%	20	33%	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>132</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 5 Time spent with patients (n = 60)**

Parameters		No of responses				
S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Total %
1	I am usually kept waiting for a long time when I am at the doctor's office	30	50%	30	50%	100
2	I have to wait too long for emergency treatment	22	37%	38	63%	100
3	Doctors usually spend plenty of time with me	40	67%	20	33%	100
4	The office hours in which I can get medical care are convenient for me	52	87%	8	13%	100
						<b>100</b>

## INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Table 1 presents general satisfaction of patients. Majority (85%) opined that they were satisfied with the attention they got; 90% agreed that each time they had visited the facility, health providers had allowed them enough time to narrate everything about their medical condition. Similarly, 62% of respondents agreed that they received attention easily when they had come for medical care. However, many respondents (70%) wished that basic things such as drugs and water supplies, toilet facilities and general environment were improved upon.

Table 2 centres on technical quality of care. Majority (88%) agreed that doctors explained the reasons to them for any prescribed medical test. The same perception was replicated when they were asked if they were satisfied with the way doctors examined them when they presented for treatment. Respondents (58%) opined that it is usually difficult for them to get medical attention whenever they had come not early to the facility. On the downside,

majority (70%) opined that doctor's consulting rooms did not appear to them to be having what it takes to provide high quality care.

Table 3 presents data on communication between doctors, nurses and patients. Majority (63%) disagreed that doctors sometimes use medical terms without explaining what they meant while 78% agreed that doctors are friendly and courteous during medical attention. Majority of respondents (73%) were impressed with the attention they received from nurses and this was corroborated (73%) when asked if nurses showed them care and compassion when being attended to.

Table 4 focuses on financial consideration by patients. Respondents (62%) disagreed that they pay more for medical care than they had expected when they come to the facility. This was corroborated when 70% responded that they do not think the amount being charged for medical care was unreasonable. However, 45% reported worries over large medical bills which they have had to pay sometimes, while 67% were in the affirmative that they were confident that their payment will ensure that they receive the type of care they need.

Table 5 assesses patients' perception on duration of time spent on accessing care. 'I am usually kept waiting for a long time in the doctors' offices' averaged 50% while 37% reported to be kept waiting for too long for emergency treatment. As if to commend, respondents (67%) felt satisfied that doctors spent plenty of time with them during medical consultation and as much as 87% agreed that hours of service at which they receive medical attention were convenient for them.

## DISCUSSION

The study focused on patient satisfaction in health care delivery. On general satisfaction with health care services being provided, 77% were positive while 23% were negative. However, majority reported the need to improve on toilet facilities, drugs and water supplies. This finding somewhat aligns with a previous research which showed that 87% of respondents were of the opinion that there was an overall quality of health service delivery

against 23% in that study<sup>12</sup>. The present research also aligns with a previous research on general patient satisfaction at FMC, Bida which reported that 78.5% of patients were satisfied with the hospital services<sup>19</sup>.

Concerning technical quality, it was discovered that 66% of the respondents agreed that doctors exhibit their professional skills and comportment in an appreciable manner while delivering health care services. This is in agreement with, although ranked a little more above the findings in a previous study conducted in Enugu State Tertiary Health Institution, where 60% of respondents rated the services provided by doctors as outstanding<sup>15</sup>.

The perception on communication between doctors, nurses and patients showed that respondents were 65% satisfied. This falls below expectation when x-rayed against the findings in a research conducted in Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Kano State, Nigeria where 90% of respondents reported good communication and relationship between doctors, nurses and patients<sup>17</sup>.

Parameters for assessing cost of getting health care reported 55% dissatisfaction, leaving 45% on the other side of the divide. This finding seems not to have established a clear distinction between those who were satisfied and those who were not. It thus suggests a seemingly reasonable practice in terms of health care costs in the facility.

Regarding time patients spent with doctors, 60% of respondents were satisfied while 40% were not. This seemingly aligns with a similar study<sup>17</sup> which reported 70% of respondents were satisfied with the duration of time they spent with doctors, leaving 30% dissatisfied.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Although average satisfaction was generally reported, the following remain necessary recommendations to enhance quality of patient satisfaction that this study suggests.

There is need to organize seminar/workshop for

health personnel to ensure that basic standards of good customer/patient relations are internalized and maintained.

Adequate steps should be taken to monitor staff behaviour as related to their day to day contact with patients to avoid acts of indiscipline.

There should be awareness campaign of service competences of public hospitals to enable the public take advantage of them.

Special card should be designed for emergency cases to be kept in the custody of front desk officers in emergency units. This card should be issued 'freely' for treatment to immediately commence and the cost later billed into the patient's final bills. This will help to reduce patient-waiting time to access care in the units.

Hospital equipment and infrastructure such as regular power supply, adequate water and provision and supply of essential drugs should take precedence in order to meet patient demands at all times.

Identify and cut out unnecessary processes of accessing care so that waiting time before seeing a physician or any health worker is reduced to enhance patient satisfaction.

Government and management should help subsidize the cost of health care services especially for most rural dwellers who go through a lot to be able to come to the health facility to access care giving their economic disadvantages. Healthcare as part of social service on the part of the government should be taken into consideration for doing this.

## CONCLUSION

Patient satisfaction is key in improving the health condition of patients. The study was conducted to enhance the quality of patient satisfaction in care delivery. It was found that patients were reasonably satisfied with the services. However, long waiting time, inadequate drugs and water

supplies, poor toilet facilities and relative high cost of care were factors identified to have negatively impacted on patient satisfaction in the study. It is inferred that if these are remedied satisfaction will be further enhanced.

### CONFLIT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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