



Improving the Patient's Experience

By Elaine M. Skoch, RN, MN, CNAA, EMBA and Marly McMillen, MBA

The best way to find out what your patients think about the care they receive at your practice is to ask. Here are some tips for conducting meaningful patient satisfaction surveys:

- Be sure to emphasize that your goal in conducting a satisfaction survey is to improve service, care and patient satisfaction.
- Assure your patients that the process keeps their responses confidential.
- The most cost effective and reliable format for patient satisfaction surveys is a brief (3-5 questions), written survey. This should include providing a stamped, addressed envelope to a destination other than the practice (to ensure results are kept confidential).
- The survey should be simple, and easy to understand.
- The best patient satisfaction surveys focus on these 4 issues:
 - Access to care
 - Perception of quality of care
 - Communication with the provider and practice staff
 - Satisfaction with their provider relationship
- How your practice gets the survey to patients and the number of surveys to be given in order to produce a valid sample size and outcome will vary by practice size.
- Conduct patient satisfaction surveys at various times throughout the year in order to get the most useful results for your practice.
- Be sure to ask what the practice is doing well and to ask for suggestions on how to improve will help give more meaning to the results.
- In analyzing results, look for patterns in the feedback. Remember as the number of responses increases the reliability of the feedback also increases.

- Celebrate the successes!
- Determine as a team what can be done to address any patterns of complaints.
- Develop a report to share with patients based on feedback given. This is important because this way they know you are taking the process seriously. This report should communicate aggregate outcomes, what's being done well, and what the practice is doing to address areas of concern. This can be delivered to patients through a newsletter, a waiting room flyer, or via your website.
- As your patients get used to giving the practice feedback the surveys can become more sophisticated and/or targeted. The first goal must be to get them comfortable to participate.

Additional resources:

Find out more about TransforMED's National Demonstration Project (NDP)
<http://www.transformed.com/ndp.cfm>

Learn about the TransforMED Medical Home model
<http://www.transformed.com/transformed.cfm>

Read relevant TransforMED workingpapers:

Tips for Reducing Patient Cycle Time
<http://www.transformed.com/workingPapers/ReducingCycleTime.pdf>

Touch Time Tips
<http://www.transformed.com/workingPapers/TouchTimeTips.pdf>

Leadership Tips for Physicians
<http://www.transformed.com/workingPapers/LeadershipTipsPhysicians.pdf>