

Improving Patient Satisfaction through Training and Development Interventions: Case Study of Liaquat National Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan

Muhammad Athar Siddiqui and Dr. Mirza Abrar Baig

SZABIST

Karachi, Pakistan

Abstract

Organizational Development practitioners hold notion that application of management practices is difficult in service sector and perhaps regard hospitals to be the most challenging case. Complexities of health care and human involvement hanging between life and death calls for vigilant human resources to meet the end goal of maximum patient satisfaction. Training and Development system has a direct positive effect on the achieving high patient satisfaction scores.

Research was carried out to study patient satisfaction level at Liaquat National Hospital (LNH), Karachi. The study evaluates technical (core medical) and non-technical (human behavior) dimensions of patient satisfaction and connects its findings to training and development opportunities available at LNH in both respects. The study recommends general management skills training and development framework for increasing patient satisfaction scores at LNH.

The research has been conducted through unstructured questionnaires, discussion sessions with administration staff and on-site personal observations.

1. INTRODUCTION

“What now has to be learned is to manage service institutions for performance. This may well be the biggest challenge and most important management task in this century [1].” The challenge present in the quote turns greater when this mandate is applied to health delivery systems. Hospitals are geared for patient focus and training and development is a critical internal function of this race without a finish line. Taking this maxim as a premise, it is necessary for hospital administrations to prepare their workforce for satisfying all the facets of patient satisfaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Patient Satisfaction: A common believe is that patient satisfaction means receiving good treatment and medical facilities leading to recovery from illness. However, higher emphasis has been placed on assuring that total patient care is provided which takes in to consideration patient’s social and emotional needs. This means making sure employees understand the medical and non-medical dimensions that collectively form the patient satisfaction scores.

The first lesson in accomplishing patient satisfaction is to start with evaluating employee satisfaction. With the right support from hospital administration, the satisfied employees in turn reflect the hospital’s commitment to excellence when they care for patients. As a result, the patient’s needs are met and the patient refers others to facility or uses the services of that organization again in the future. One research reveals that issues dealing with wages, benefits and physical environment are not as related to satisfaction as the items on communication, worker attitude and management practices [2].

The Jackson Organization (Survey Research Consultants) using a database of 60,000 employees of health care have found staffing matters, information sharing roles, paramedics coordination, and attitudinal and behavioral issues to have strong influence on overall patient satisfaction scores.

Training and Development: The patient can be satisfied only if carefully selected employees are given the training, environment, technology, motive and power to deliver excellent services [3].

“Training is a learning process which focuses on employee’s current jobs, enhancing those skills and abilities which are required to immediately perform their jobs. Training can involve the changing of skills, knowledge and attitude. Development is much the same as training, the different lays only in the time frame involved. Development focuses more on the future jobs the individual is expected to perform [4].”

In the case of hospitals, patient satisfaction survey scores are used as measure of Training Need Analysis to pin point the areas with low scores which require training and development. These areas can be technical that as related to unit of work performed, and can be bridged by on-the-job trainings, ward rounds, lectures, hands-on experience or continuous medical education (CME). The non-medical areas (attitudinal, behavioral and relationship) can be overcome by management skills trainings, counseling, interpersonal workshops, role playing etc. Care must be taken in grouping the participants according to related work, education and employment stage in the hospital.

3. LIAQUAT NATIONAL HOSPITAL (LNH) KARACHI

Established in 1953, starting out with four outpatients and 50 beds, LNH today has grown to 700 bed hospital with 32 outdoor specialty services, providing the latest diagnostic

and therapeutic facilities. This hospital has 82 departments (major and allied) which are looked after by approximately 4000 staff member of different levels.

Entering in the field of education in 1978, today it plays a pivotal role as a leading Postgraduate Medical Center having prestigious school of nursing, a school of physiotherapy and rehabilitation, college of medical laboratory technology, and offers numerous technical courses in a vast spectrum of services [5].

4. RELATING PATIENT SATISFACTION AND TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT AT LNH

Liaquat National Hospital makes concrete efforts to ensure patient satisfaction. Social Services Department (SSD) is responsible for conducting patient satisfaction surveys on monthly basis. This process is facilitated by social service workers. SSD also takes care of financial needs of patients through assessment forms and arranges necessary counseling.

Research Findings: To evaluate the patient satisfaction at LNH, first hand research was conducted. Primary survey concluded that overall score patient satisfaction score based on responses of 120 patients to be 62.5 %. It was evident that patients are highly satisfied with core treatment issues scoring highly at 70 %; the role of training in this regard was evaluated and was found that hospital provides best training and development opportunities for doctors and paramedical staff. These programs include formal class settings, skill lab activities, clinical rounds, surgical research meetings, etc. An important element of technical training at LNH is very strong and regular CME program that is enlightening doctors with the latest issues and innovations in the field.

Research analysis revealed that patients showed certain level of dissatisfaction with behavioral aspects of patient focus, and the combine score for attitudes, behaviors and feedback mechanism averaged to lower middle range of 45th percentile. Specific observations highlighted coordination and communication problems amongst employees. Responses from employees were also gathered which hinted that hospital staff expects more support from SSD in ensuring patient care. Connection was established with role of training avenues in this regard and was found there is potential for training opportunities to bridge the gap. Thus, the direct relationship between training workers and patient satisfaction was verified.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Preliminary Training and Development Framework: To overcome the issues cited in research findings, a complete preliminary training and development framework using step-by-step process focused approach is outlined. It is recommended that training initially takes care of employee satisfaction issues and strengthen employee relations bond

(Figure 1). However, it must be noted that core Human Resource (HR) functions and HR Information System also needs to be fortified as pre-requisite for the effective implementation of training and development system.

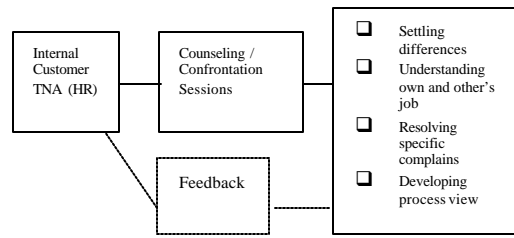


Figure 1: Internal Customer Satisfaction Module

Stage wise modules based on employee level are suggested for employees to understand collective jobs and develop interpersonal skills in context of patient focus strategy (Figures 2 – 5).

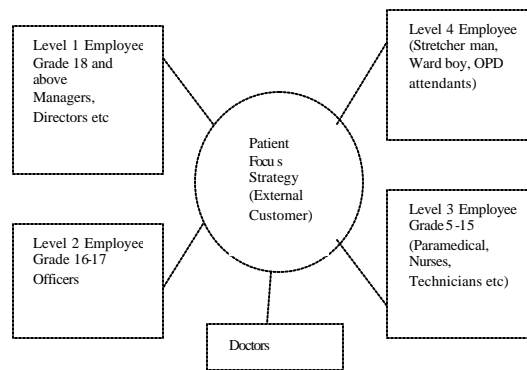


Figure 2: Patient Focus Strategy Definitions Module

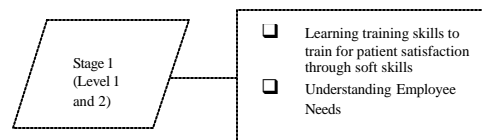


Figure 3: Stage 1 Program Directions

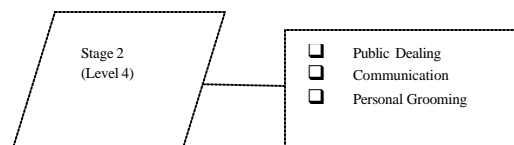


Figure 4: Stage 2 Program Directions

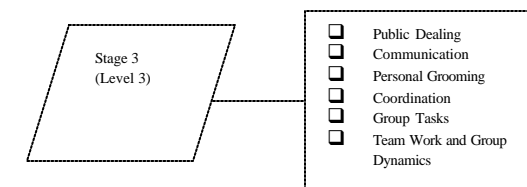


Figure 5: Stage 3 Program Directions

At the completion of stage wise training, integrated model combining stage wise modules is formed to present total picture, which can be used to overcome the patient satisfaction problems and to improve patient care standards (Figure 6).

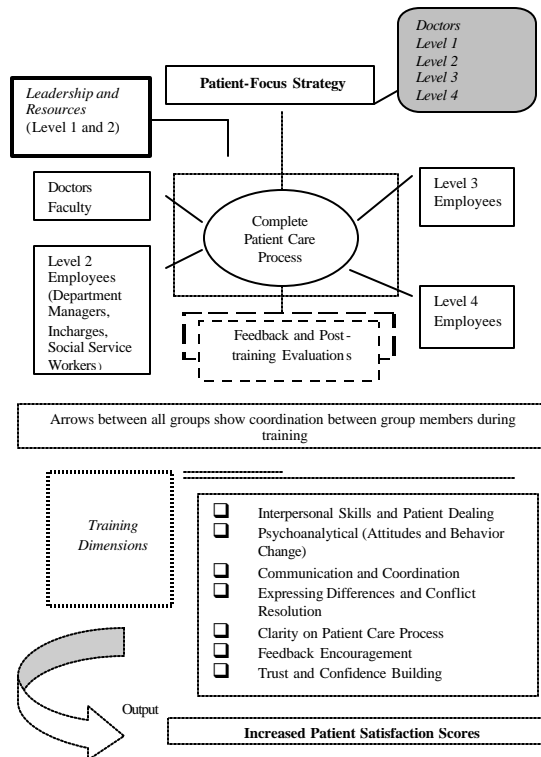


Figure 6: Integrated Training Framework for Increasing Patient Satisfaction Scores on Relationship Dimensions

With sincerity of purpose given, recommended training and development strategies must act as impetus towards a new orientation for Quality Patient Care at Liaquat National Hospital.

Expected Outcomes of the Preliminary Training Model: The program marked above is a primary model that is to serve as guidelines for establishing training and development drive at LNH. Granting that truth of purpose prevails and hospital is selflessly working for accomplishing maximum patient satisfaction, the worked out recommended models must definitely act as anchor for HRM&D department in finalizing its training and development strategies for employees which puts patient

care above everything else. The theme of training programs is powering relationships amongst employees and owning patient focus definitions. Provided, findings are taken sincerely, resources are mobilized and cooperation is sought, following outcomes are expected at the end of the exercise.

- Foundation of system that lays the first step towards eliminating social and behavioral problems responsible for low scores on non-medical dimensions of patient satisfaction at the Hospital.
- Fresh outlook of work by understanding total process of patient care and respect for each other's unit of work.
- Documented definitions of Patient Focus for employees and doctors of all levels.
- Improvement in communication and coordination system amongst staff members.
- New positive attitudes helping staff to understand emotional needs of patients and thereby improving response to patient needs.
- Interpersonal skills helping frontline and paramedical staff to deal with patients and their attendees promptly and courteously.
- Creating atmosphere of information sharing, encouraging staff to take feedback from patients and consider it to be important element for raising patient care.
- Using initial training system to develop future programs customized according to hospital needs.

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