Learning Objectives

- Recognize the process of managing patient complaints within the health center
- Outline the steps involved with selecting and implementing a patient satisfaction survey
- List the various ways to use feedback to improve quality
- Identify different types of feedback that are important to analyze and monitor
Sources of Patient Feedback: Where Do We Hear about It?

- Patients
  - Patient complaint made verbally to someone in the health center
  - Patient satisfaction survey
  - Patient portal or via practice web site

- Staff
  - Incident report
  - Patient complaint or experience recounted by member of frontline staff

Sources of Patient Feedback: Where Do We Hear about It?

- External facilities or referral providers
  - Phone call about a complaint or issue from hospital or outside provider
  - Referral or external hospital satisfaction survey
  - Federal or State Agencies

- Social media
  - Patient experience posted online (Yelp, Facebook, Twitter)
Patient Feedback: Patient Complaints

▸ Studies have shown that patient complaints are positively associated with malpractice risk. (Hickson et al.)
▸ Trends or repeated inappropriate behavior can prompt intervention before patients decide to leave the practice or initiate lawsuits.
▸ Complaints need to be prioritized on basis of severity level. Complaints which are more important are addressed first. Complaints of a serious nature warrant reporting to risk management and organization leadership.
▸ An effective complaints management system supports compliance with regulations by ensuring streamlined workflow and the correction of complaints.

Patient Feedback: What is a Complaint?

▸ A statement that a situation is unsatisfactory or unacceptable
▸ Complaints are predictors of malpractice risk
▸ Common types of complaints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>• He said he ordered antibiotic but the drug store didn’t give it to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Continuity of Care | • Never see the same provider twice  
                   | • No appointments? I’ll go to the urgent care center                  |
| Staff/Physician Performance | • Provider consistently keeps me waiting forever  
                              | • My provider was too rushed. I barely saw him.  
                              | • Doctor doesn’t call back, he is mad at me                          |
| Access to Care   | • Sent me to a dermatologist not on the bus line  
                   | • Dr. Derm did surgery and never could reach him after               |
| Appropriateness of Care | • I have a cough, not sure why I need a mammogram  
                           | • Mammogram results not discussed for 3 years                      |
Complaint Can Become a Claim

- Claim: Demand or request for something considered one's due

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>• Provider didn’t re-order antibiotic; led to massive wound infection and deep debridement of upper arm. <strong>Delay in treatment</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuity of Care</td>
<td>• Mammogram ordered by one provider in 2010 had abnormal findings. Missed by several different providers at several visits and finally discovered in 2013 patient was never notified of findings <strong>Delay in Diagnosis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/Physician Performance</td>
<td>• Doctor was rushed, talked fast and I didn't get all of the information; no chance to ask questions <strong>Noncompliance in care</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Care</td>
<td>• Never made it to dermatologist; widespread melanoma and chemotherapy. <strong>Delay in treatment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness of Care</td>
<td>• I have a cough but Dr. said the important thing is the mammogram. Didn’t give a follow up appointment. I guess I don’t need antibiotics. Pneumonia, hospital, non-responsive ventilator care. <strong>Missed diagnosis</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Establish a Policy for Handling Patient Complaints

- Develop a written policy so that any verbal complaint made by a patient is handled the same manner
  - Identify specific individual(s) by job title that are responsible for managing patient complaints
  - Develop a tool to document a patient complaint (can be an incident report)
  - Include specific details about the complaint and make sure that there is a plan of action to investigate the complaint within a specified time frame
  - Develop a contingency as to what to do when a patient wants to make a verbal complaint and the individual(s) are not in the health center
Managing Patient Satisfaction Surveys

- Select a satisfaction survey
  - Internal Satisfaction Survey
- Set time parameters for distribution of surveys
- Determine an active vs. passive distribution process
- Choose drop off locations/mail in/other methods
- Analyze results
  - Enough sample size for each provider
  - Create a standardized report for comparison
  - Identify who reviews the results in the health center
- Develop action plans to address identified issues

Patient Satisfaction Survey Sample

Thinking about your visit with the provider you saw today, how would you rate the following:

| 1. How long you waited to get an appointment | Poor | Fair | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
| 2. Convenience of the location of the office |     |     |      |           |           |
| 3. Getting through to the office by phone  |     |     |      |           |           |
| 4. Length of time waiting at the office    |     |     |      |           |           |
| 5. Time spent with the physician/health care professional you saw |     |     |      |           |           |
| 6. Explanation of what was done for you    |     |     |      |           |           |
| 7. Technical skills (thoroughness, carefuiness, competence) of the physician/health care professional you saw |     |     |      |           |           |
| 8. The personal manner (courtesy, respect, sensitivity, friendliness) of the person you saw |     |     |      |           |           |
| 9. The visit overall                      |     |     |      |           |           |
Key Points for a Satisfaction Survey

► A patient satisfaction survey can demonstrate that a health center or free clinic is interested in quality and in doing things better.
► When choosing (or designing) a survey questionnaire, look for three things: brevity, clarity, and consistency.
► Would you recommend this provider to another patient?
► Always ask an open-ended question at the end which encourages people to identify issues that may NOT be on the survey.

Can Satisfaction Survey Data Prevent a Claim?

► We all know what is supposed to happen during a patient experience with our health center or free clinic
  ▪ Patients are our best source for finding out what is really happening
► Sometimes we are so busy getting through the day that we miss the little things
  ▪ Patients are keenly observant and can offer great input on both the providers and the environment
► Never underestimate the power of the sentinel effect
  ▪ The theory that productivity and outcomes can be improved through the process of observation and measurement
Managing Other Feedback: Social Media

- Blogs that allow patients/families to give opinions about their healthcare experience
- Facebook
  - Do you have a Facebook page?
  - Policy on staff using Facebook and HIPAA privacy issues
  - What if it is not true?
- Twitter
- Snap Chat
- Keep centers’ leadership informed about social media

Is There a Way We Can Prioritize Different Types of Feedback to Limit Exposure?

- Issues resulting in injury to patient or visitor
- Any issue that has resulted in a perceived delay [appointment, lab result, diagnostic test result]
- Miscommunication involving providers [one provider told me this and another told me something else...]
- Document feedback and have designated staff analyze and trend it to determine risk
How Do We Use Complaints and Satisfaction Reports to Improve Care?

- Three weeks to get an appointment
- No one answers the phone at lunch time
- Only appointments are during my work hours
- Too much paperwork at sign in
- Wait time in exam room
- I did not understand what the doctor said
- They gave me an appointment on the day I babysit

What Can We Do to Improve Satisfaction?

- Address two to three top complaint areas as part of center’s quality program. Get the front and back office involved.
- Remember that what is important to the patient may not be important to the provider.
- Ensure that communication among providers is consistent. If you don’t agree with your colleague, discuss in private.
- Ensure good documentation and feedback to patients and providers.
What Can We Do to Resolve Complaints?

- Step back and consider whether you have done everything you reasonably can to salvage the relationship.
- Patients sometimes escalate their behavior when they feel they aren’t getting the services they expect or when they feel their needs aren’t being addressed.
- The quickest response is often a defensive one. Deferring the patient to another member of your staff who is less invested in the relationship or the process of care can be quite helpful.
- Chronic complainer or non-compliant, consider one-to-one assessment to determine the cause. If unable to resolve move to a formal team care conference.

Review the Patient's Record

- Provider should have objective and factual documentation that supports any next steps and referrals
- Examples:
  - Have patient instructions and education been documented in the patient’s record?
  - Have patient complaints or accusations against the practice, or inappropriate remarks to providers or staff, been documented?
  - Does documentation objectively note that the provider and staff have attempted to resolve the problems or address the issues?
  - Has the provider consistently documented treatment recommendations and warnings to the patient about possible negative effects of noncompliance?
Solutions for Ms. Key

- Set up a care conference involving multidisciplinary staff and the patient to solicit feedback from both sides and recommend solutions
- Think about Ms. Key’s behavior and perhaps set up a “behavior contract” with her to provide documented evidence that the health center tried to work with her on her compliance issues
- Make sure that front desk staff always verifies address and phone information at EVERY visit so that old contact information is not used when sending out patient materials

Summary

- Manage complaints
  - Policy and procedure
  - Learn
- Improving patient satisfaction
  - Top two to three areas of concern for quality program
  - Prevent recurrence or a more serious situation
- Individual patient response
  - Team care conference
  - Defer case to another team member
References


Clinical_RM_Program@ecri.org
(610) 825-6000, x5200