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Outpatients' Satisfaction with the Quality of Medical Examination and Treatment Services at Bach Mai Hospital

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Abstract

According to the rules of the market, doctors must satisfy customers as a condition of survival for the medical facility. In developed countries, medical services are also a competitive market. Patients only choose medical facilities with high quality, reasonable prices, and a dedicated service attitude. This study was conducted with the aim of assessing outpatients' satisfaction with the quality of medical examination and treatment services at Bach Mai Hospital through survey results. The survey subjects are outpatients

at Bach Mai Hospital. We use both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative research methods were carried out with SPSS software, including descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha analysis. Research results show that outpatients' satisfaction with the quality of medical examination and treatment services at Bach Mai Hospital is rated quite highly. Based on this result, the study proposes some recommendations for Bach Mai Hospital and outpatients at Bach Mai Hospital.

Keywords: Outpatients, Medical, Vietnam

JEL codes: C52, L81, L83, F66, J01, O15

1. Introduction

According to the rules of the market, doctors must satisfy customers as a condition of survival for the medical facility. In developed countries, medical services are also a competitive market. Patients only choose medical facilities with high quality, reasonable prices, and a dedicated service attitude.

Besides market factors, the concept of "patients as customers" has a deeper meaning. Patients are a special type of customer, and hospitals are places that provide special services related to the most precious thing, which is human health and life. Both subjects need to share, understand, and respect each other. Doctors respect customers, and vice versa, customers must also respect doctors, because they are not just service providers; they are teachers.

Patients who come to the hospital for medical examination and treatment are collectively called outpatients. Patients who stay in the hospital for treatment are called inpatients. So, we can see that outpatient patients account for a much larger number than inpatients. As for Bach Mai Hospital, on average, every day the hospital welcomes about 5,000 to 7,000 outpatients for medical examination and treatment.

Bach Mai Hospital is a complete special-class general hospital, performing many important functions and tasks assigned by the Ministry of Health. In February 2020, the hospital was approved to pilot autonomy for the period 2020–2021. One of the target contents of the decision approving the autonomy pilot of Bach Mai Hospital is to improve the quality of examination and treatment, provide comprehensive care, and solve the overload situation. Gradually build a modern hospital on par with prestigious hospitals in the region and around the world and perform well as a final-level hospital. Doing this means improving patient satisfaction, creating trust and confidence, and attracting many patients to come for examination and treatment at the hospital because the patient is the last one. Evaluate the quality of hospital services.

2. Literature Review

Quality of medical examination and treatment services

When it comes to medical services, we know that this is a special type of service with its own characteristics. To date, there is still no unified definition of health service quality, and there are still debates about how to measure health service quality. However, there are some definitions of medical services that are highly general and commonly used:

According to Donabedian (1980) [2], quality medical services are the application of medical science and technology to bring optimal benefits to health without increasing their harmful risks to humans. The level of quality is the extent to which the services provided are expected to achieve the best balance between benefits and risks.

According to Nguyen (2022) [8], a quality medical service is one that must meet the patient's requirements and bring the highest efficiency to the medical service provider. Quality medical services must focus on the patient, always respect the patient's health, and create favorable conditions for patients to easily access health care and use it at the same time. Appropriate treatment techniques and regimens, providing necessary information to help patients understand their health condition. What is more important is that medical services must bring health recovery to patients with the best medical examination and treatment conditions and protect people from the risk of poverty caused by medical costs.

Customer satisfaction

According to Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) [10], customer satisfaction with service quality is measured by the difference between expected quality and achieved quality.

According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) [11], customer satisfaction is the consideration of whether a service or product satisfies their needs and expectations.

According to Kotler and Keller (2006) [7], customer satisfaction is the level of a person's feeling state that results from comparing the results obtained from the product or output with the person's expectations.

It can be seen that satisfaction refers to the comparison between perception and expectation. Customers will evaluate which products bring the highest value within their budget given their level of knowledge, ability, motivation, and income. Therefore, the level of value provided by an organization or firm to customers will significantly affect the level of customer satisfaction and satisfaction with the organization's or firm's products or services.

Patient satisfaction

In the medical environment, patient satisfaction is considered a difficult concept to measure because it includes many subjective components of the evaluator. We can state some definitions of patient satisfaction, as follows:

According to Fitzpatrick (1993) [3], patient satisfaction comes from a naturalistic perspective that places more emphasis on emotional rather than tangible aspects. Evaluating patients' emotional reactions is a method to identify their satisfaction. Emotional reactions are the patient's reflection on medical services.

According to Nguyen (2005) [9], patient satisfaction is expressed in the level of satisfaction, feeling of benefit, and

effectiveness each individual receives from medical service providers through their services and products.

According to Nguyen Thanh Binh (2022) [8], patient satisfaction is an emotional state in which the patient's needs and desires for the values and benefits of medical services are met lower, equal, or higher than expectations, leading to patient satisfaction with the services provided by the hospital.

Thus, patient satisfaction can be understood as the perception of service quality that patients actually receive and their existing experiences or expectations. Patients who receive a service that is lower than their experience will be dissatisfied; conversely, if the service is higher than their expectations (from available experience), the patient will be satisfied.

Inheriting the results of the above studies and through interviews with experts, we built a scale to measure outpatient satisfaction with the quality of medical examination and treatment services at Bach Mai Hospital (see Table 1).

Table 1: Patient satisfaction scale

Description	Code
Patient satisfaction (HL)	
I am satisfied with the hospital's facilities.	HL1
I am satisfied with the hospital's service attitude.	HL2
I will perform a medical examination and treatment for my relatives next time.	HL3
I will recommend the hospital to others.	HL4

3. Methodology

According to the actual investigation conditions of time, human resources, and finance, the author built an initial sample of 350 observations.

Specialized clinics are assigned a limit of 35 patients for each specialized clinic: Cardiology, neurology, gastroenterology, musculoskeletal-joint, dermatology, endocrinology-diabetes, respiratory, teeth-jjaw - face, ear-nose-throat, and pediatrics.

The author collected data at the Department of Examination and Treatment at the request of Bach Mai Hospital. The questionnaire was used in the form of a printed hard copy to be distributed directly to outpatients coming for medical examinations at the Department of Examination and Treatment upon request of Bach Mai Hospital.

After the questionnaires were sent, the hard copies were entered directly into SPSS 21 software. After all questionnaires were completely entered into the SPSS 21 software, the author proceeded to type them out. Remove invalid survey forms, such as incomplete information, filling in more than 1 response option for observed variables requiring only 1 option, etc. All the forms, after being cleaned, were saved into SPSS 21 software to prepare for analysis.

After distributing the ballots, the author received a total of 350 ballots; however, many ballots were invalid due to missing information or unreliable answers. The author cleaned the data, and the final result left 327 votes, which were included in the descriptive statistical analysis of the sample to check the suitability and representativeness of the sample. The sample was subjected to descriptive statistics based on demographic factors.

4. Research Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Outpatients' satisfaction with the quality of medical examination and treatment services at Bach Mai Hospital

Scale	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
HL1	327	1	5	3.39	.923
HL2	327	1	4	3.22	.851
HL3	327	1	4	3.20	.846
HL4	327	1	4	3.34	.968

The results of Table 2 show that the responses to the statements on the outpatient satisfaction scale with the hospital's service quality are quite diverse. There are opinions that strongly agree and opinions that strongly disagree. The minimum and maximum values of the scales range from 1 to 5, showing that there is no limit in terms of variation for the scales used.

The average values of the observed variables do not have a large difference, proving that there is consensus on the level of importance between the research variables.

Cronbach' alpha

Table 3 results show that the Cronbach alpha of patient satisfaction is 0.809. All observed variables have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient if Item Deleted that is smaller than the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the total variable. The total variable correlation coefficients are all greater than 0.3. Thus, this is a good scale that is closely correlated to measure outpatient satisfaction with the quality of medical examination and treatment services (Hoang & Trong, 2008^[6]; Hair *et al.*, 2009; Hair *et al.*, 2014).

Table 3: Results of Cronbach's Alpha Testing of Attributes and Item-Total (Statistics)

Code	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Outpatients' satisfaction with the quality of medical examination and treatment services at Bach Mai Hospital: Cronbach Alpha = 0.809		
HL1	.515	.812
HL2	.600	.772
HL3	.766	.695
HL4	.640	.754

5. Conclusion and implications

According to Decision 368/QĐ-HĐQL promulgating the Regulations on Organization and Operation of Bach Mai Hospital on July 8, 2022, Bach Mai Hospital has the following tasks, including:

(i) Medical examination and treatment:

Organizing the provision of health check, medical examination, treatment, emergency, and last-line general treatment services in the Vietnamese medical network system for patients nationwide and foreign patients, contributing to the recovery of patients. The work of caring for and protecting people's health.

Health examination for subjects traveling for business, study, and labor at home and abroad; health examination for foreigners and those married to foreigners.

Organize and implement modern medical techniques.

Rehabilitation after treatment and rehabilitation in the community.

Research, apply, and expand the scale and scope of medical examination and treatment service activities in accordance with the law.

(ii) scientific research work

Organize scientific and technological activities; research, application, and transfer of new techniques and methods in medical examination and treatment activities; Participate in research to solve problems related to people's health.

Lead and participate in scientific research projects as assigned by competent authorities.

Organize scientific conferences and seminars according to the provisions of the law.

Implement scientific research cooperation programs with domestic and foreign organizations and individuals in accordance with the law.

Types of customers of Bach Mai Hospital: Emergency patients, patients referred by other services, patients in need, foreign patients, people in need of health checks, people coming to study, work, scientific research, and other subjects coming to work according to the provisions of law.

In hospitals, the quality of medical examination and treatment is the most important and determines the hospital's existence. High-quality medical examination and treatment increases the efficiency of hospital operations, saving costs; conversely, poor quality can lead to increased rates of illness and death, increasing medical examination and treatment costs. For that reason, many research projects have been carried out to measure the quality of medical services at different hospitals using different analytical models. Some studies have used the original SERVQUAL model described by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988)^[10] or the SERVPERF model by Cronin and Taylor (1992)^[1], whereas other studies have adapted different models (DONABEDIAN, JICAHO, KQCAH) according to their health care requirements.

With the continuous transformation of the economy, in order to develop sustainably and bring more value not only to the unit but also to the community, retaining old customers and attracting more new customers is the key. Medical facilities need serious attention. One of the ways to do that is to improve the quality of medical services to make people more and more satisfied.

Healthcare is increasingly becoming a field with great potential. One of the important factors when patients choose a hospital to receive health care is the quality of medical services and their level of satisfaction with that service. Therefore, it cannot be denied that patient satisfaction with the quality of medical services plays an important role in the medical field. In order for Bach Mai Hospital to increasingly develop and meet all people's medical examination and treatment needs, the hospital's Board of Directors needs to promptly and fully grasp the factors that affect patient satisfaction with quality health care services. From there, depending on the practical situation and understanding the causes of dissatisfaction among patients and their families, find solutions to improve the quality of medical examination and treatment services.

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