

HCAHPS vs. Patient Satisfaction and Loyalty Measurement

Katie M. Owens, Performance Improvement and Research Leader

Introduction

The Baptist Health Care Leadership Group is often asked by health care organizations about the value of using both the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers Survey (HCAHPS) and traditional patient satisfaction surveys.

Creating patient centered excellence is not dependent on a particular survey product. It is the combination of committed senior executives, an accountability system with measurable outcomes, and an engaged workforce ensuring consistency, standardization and deployment of the tools and processes necessary to make the patient the center of the organization's culture.

Accordingly, patient experience measurement tools offer a variety of advantages for an organization to better understand opportunities to monitor performance and drive improvements. However, without effective deployment and monitoring of tools and processes to enable patient centeredness, performance and operational excellence gains will be at best inconsistent.

HCAHPS vs. Patient Satisfaction Measurement

HCAHPS

In some ways, HCAHPS is the equivalent of the Joint Commission- it is the established minimum standard for healthcare organizations. For instance, the expectation is now set that Doctors and Nurses *Always* communicate with patients and family members in a way they understand and that Staff *Always* provide help as soon as the patient desires.

The HCAHPS questionnaire addresses patients' perceptual quality and the frequency of behaviors. In essence, HCAHPS seeks to measure *how often* key behaviors occur rather than *how well* hospitals perform those behaviors.

There are drawbacks to a sole HCAHPS survey regarding monitoring complaint resolution, addressing the needs of family and friends, and supporting patients' emotional needs (to name a few). However, despite these limitations, there is no question that HCAHPS is taking the spotlight. With proposed Value Based Purchasing coming into effect in FY2013 and the rise of Transparency, hospital's performance on HCAHPS (along with quality measures) will have significant financial, managed care and community image implications.

Although possible to strictly use the HCAHPS Survey, national survey vendors add tremendous value by administering the survey and reporting the data because their technology allows hospitals to receive regular reports accompanied with Percentile Rankings. Strictly participating in HCAHPS and relying on Hospital Compare for reporting will not give Hospital's timely access to critical patient experience monitoring data nor the ability to "drill down" into results. Additionally, a sole HCAHPS survey will typically only promote an organization to achieve the minimum standard for the patient experience.

Patient Satisfaction/Loyalty

Where HCAHPS leave off, patient experience survey vendors pick up. Traditional patient satisfaction/loyalty surveys measure the experiential quality of the healthcare experience (vs. HCAHPS perceptual quality). Survey tools like that of Press Ganey, NRC+Picker and PRC, establish a means for measurement across the entire hospital and inclusion of key disciplines that impact the patient experience (beyond Nursing and Physicians). Thus, the ability to leverage survey intelligence has a broader reach than the HCAHPS survey.

Additionally, national survey vendors add value through their databank of hospital performance enabling percentile rankings and segmentation (e.g., benchmarks by hospital size, location).

However, utilizing a stand alone inpatient patient satisfaction/loyalty survey without participating in HCAHPS will put hospitals at financial risk and jeopardize community image perceptions- as results will not be transparent through Hospital Compare. *(Patient experience measurement for emergent and outpatient care settings are still best captured through satisfaction/loyalty survey tools.)*

HCAHPS Supplemental Survey Tools

The more recent development in the patient experience measurement field (and the approach BLG recommends) is an integrated tool that incorporates patient satisfaction items and HCAHPS. Most national survey vendors offer integrated survey questionnaires that measure experiential and perceptual quality.

The advantages of this approach are a more holistic understanding of the hospital experience, availability of external benchmarks and web-based reporting. The disadvantages are cost and length of the survey tool (as hospitals are required that the HCAHPS questions make up 27 items on each survey). Despite added cost, this tool enables organizations to monitor all of the aspects of care that are most influential in driving HCAHPS improvements. Thus, integrated survey tools facilitate a clearer line of sight to performance improvement for employees and the ability to positively impact HCAHPS results.

Comparison of Survey Tools

Survey Tool	Dimensions Measured
<p>HCAHPS</p> <p>Measures: <i>Perceptual Quality</i> <i>How often?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nurse communication ▪ Doctor communication ▪ Responsiveness of hospital staff ▪ Pain management ▪ Medication communication ▪ Discharge information ▪ Environment Items: Cleanliness & Quietness ▪ Outcomes: Overall Rating and Advocacy ▪ Admissions/Intake/Scheduling
<p>Patient Satisfaction/Loyalty</p> <p>Measures: <i>Experiential Quality</i> <i>How well?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hospital and Room Environment ▪ Meals ▪ Nurse Care ▪ Physician Care ▪ Tests, Treatment and Procedures ▪ Visitors & Family ▪ Patient- and Family- Centeredness ▪ Discharge ▪ Personal and Emotional support ▪ Loyalty

Important Considerations

Regardless of an organization's survey tool, in order to achieve a greater positive impact on the patient experience, BLG recommends several critical practices for patient experience measurement and intelligence:

1. Deploy the tools and processes required to drive service and operational excellence. Ensure that accountability systems are in place to drive consistency, standardization and immediate course correction.
2. Establish a patient experience survey program that enables
 - a. Monthly reporting
 - b. Valid unit level results
 - c. Percentile rankings
3. Create organizational goals for improvement across all areas survey that cascade in a meaningful way to engage all employees in patient centered excellence.
4. Patient experience data is communicated monthly in a way that is easy to understand and generates constructive dialogue about improving the patient experience.

Leveraging Survey Data to Drive Patient Centered Excellence

BLG will work to embed into the core of the organization the tools and processes necessary to drive patient centered excellence (regardless of the survey tool utilized).

Our firm partners with organizations to deploy proprietary techniques to

1. Rapidly review baseline patient experience and other metrics to develop an initial diagnostic of the organization's performance that will help drive consulting delivery sequencing and prioritization.
2. Support the organization with a process to analyze and communicate patient satisfaction and perception results to all employees on a timely and consistent basis to create actionable knowledge.
3. Chart a course to achieve already set patient experience goals (or establish goals if not set at the time of engagement).
4. BLG will coach measurement and reporting tools to help generate meaningful results interpretation and turning the data into actionable knowledge and tactics.
5. Set up accountability management which teaches the organization the behaviors and monitoring processes to ensure partners are able to sustain improvements.

The Leadership Group has extensive experience in partnering with organizations to turn data into intelligence with the integrated tools (patient experience + HCAHPS). The approach focuses on the maximum impact touchpoints that drive perceptual and experiential quality (measured through integrated surveys).

Although, BLG recommends partners use an integrated survey, our work is not dependent on any particular vendor or survey product. Our team will teach organizations the practices that drive service and operational excellence, as well as, align measurement tools and reporting in support of each unique journey.