



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports: Patient Satisfaction Influenced More by Hospital Staff than by the Hospital Facilities

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 04 September 2012 — In an era in when hospitals compete for patients by boasting the latest clinical technology, the most prestigious physicians and impressive amenities, patient satisfaction is most influenced by human factors, especially superior service-related communication skills between hospital staff and patients, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2012 National Patient Experience StudySM released today.

The study measures patient satisfaction across all areas of the inpatient and outpatient hospital experience, including: interactions with healthcare professionals; tests and procedures; admission and discharge; and facility environment. It serves as a benchmark for the J.D. Power and Associates Distinguished Hospital Program.SM This distinction program acknowledges high levels of performance by a hospital in achieving an “outstanding” inpatient, emergency department, cardiac, maternity or outpatient experience.

The study finds that recently-hospitalized patients have high levels of overall satisfaction. Overall patient satisfaction with their inpatient hospitalization averages 825 index points on a 1,000-point scale, similar to that of guests at luxury hotels, among whom satisfaction averages 822.¹ In outpatient settings, overall patient satisfaction is higher, averaging 863. However, patient satisfaction dips to 788 for emergency department visits.

“Hospitals may attempt to attract patients and staff by adding equipment or sprucing up their facilities,” said Rick Millard, senior director of the healthcare practice at J.D. Power and Associates. “From the perspective of patients, it might be more worthwhile to invest in finding and keeping staff with superior interpersonal skills.”

Investments in staff can be overlooked, as Millard notes many hospitals have spent a lot of money in recent years to make their facilities look and feel more like hotels. Yet, facility characteristics are more important for hotels than for hospitals. For upscale hotels, the facility accounts for nearly one-half (48 percent) of guests’ overall satisfaction, while in an inpatient setting the hospital facility represents just 19 percent of patients’ overall satisfaction.

“Having an appealing hospital facility matters, but an experienced and socially skilled staff has a greater impact on patient satisfaction,” said Millard. “Personal interactions with the staff have a profound impact in both inpatient and outpatient settings.”

Doctors and nurses account for 34 percent of the overall experience ratings for inpatients, and their influence is even higher (43%) among patients in emergency settings. Among outpatients, doctors and other healthcare professionals represent 50 percent of their overall experience.

Solid interpersonal skills are especially necessary for handling the types of problems that may arise during hospitalization. When problems do occur, they may jeopardize patient satisfaction. According to the study, staff service and staff attitude are the most common types of problems that patients experience. Patients who say they

¹ J.D. Power and Associates 2012 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index StudySM

had any problem with their room or hospital staff rate their overall experience a 5.3 a 10-point scale, compared with 8.7 among patients that did not experience any problems.

“When problems occur, they produce opportunities to demonstrate a genuine interest in the patient’s needs,” said Millard. “Resolving problems is clearly associated with higher ratings by patients. This has become more important as hospital reimbursement is now linked to patient satisfaction as measured by the government through the HCAHPS [Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems] survey.”

Millard notes that one area where hospitals can learn from hotels is how transitions occur. The admission and discharge process in hospitals is analogous to check-in and check-out in the hotel industry. Among inpatients, 35 percent of the overall patient experience is predicted by the admission and discharge process; yet the impact is much less in emergency and outpatient settings, where it is 19 percent and 12 percent, respectively.

“The first and last impressions are very important for a patient, much like they are for hotel guests,” said Millard. “Getting a patient into a room quickly at the start of their hospital stay, and ensuring a smooth process during discharge, along with a follow-up call once the patient gets home to make sure they’re doing okay, goes a long way toward achieving high satisfaction.”

Nongovernmental, acute-care hospitals throughout the nation are eligible for the J.D. Power and Associates Distinguished Hospital recognition program. Recognition is valid for one year, after which time the hospital may reapply. The service excellence distinction is determined by surveying recently discharged patients regarding their perceptions of their hospital experience and comparing the results to the national benchmarks established in the National Patient Experience Study.

The 2012 National Patient Experience Study is based on responses gathered between December 2011 and March 2012 from more than 10,275 patients who received care in inpatient, emergency or outpatient facilities in the United States.

About J.D. Power and Associates

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