Patient Feedback Strategy
2016

Making patients’ view counts
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Patient feedback strategy: Making patients’ views count

“If quality is at the heart of everything we do, it must be understood from the perspective of patients.”

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1 Using Patient Feedback. Picker Institute. www.pickereurope.ac.uk
Introduction

Patient-centred care is health care that is respectful of, and responsive to, the preferences, needs and values of patients and consumers (Institute of Medicine 2001).

West Moreton is committed to continuously improving how patient-centred care as reflected in the Strategic Plan. An important way to improve patient and family centred care is through understanding and responding to how patients\(^2\) view their experience of care. We want to know, directly from our patient’s perspective, what is working well and not so well, in order to guide us on how and where to focus our efforts in improving care.

If we ask patients or their families to provide feedback, it needs to be used wisely.

Collecting feedback by itself has no value, it must be used in a way that allows staff and patients to improve the care delivered, and transparently to allow whole of organisation learning.

We must also acknowledge that a patient’s experience can be negative sometimes and their feedback can be confronting. This can prove difficult and take a personal toll on staff as care providers. We must therefore support staff to feel safe in obtaining feedback, to resist the understandable urge to be defensive, and to give them the skills to drive the required changes. This will take a sustained effort over time by reinforcing value-driven behaviours that align to patient-centred care. Again this is reflected in the Strategic Plan objective “Enable staff to be their best and give their best.”

Currently patient feedback practices at WMHHS are somewhat ad hoc, do not always lead to improvement in patient care and are often not shared between service lines. This strategy therefore outlines the framework for creating a system that triangulates patient feedback into a central repository, and uses this resource for quality improvement. It makes clear who is responsible and accountable for collecting feedback, the different ways we can obtain feedback that is appropriate for each patient group, and how the feedback can be used to drive an improvement in the care experience.

This strategy focuses on measures of experience, asking patients about their own experiences in receiving care and treatment, reported immediately or shortly after the episode of care.

This patient feedback strategy links with:

a. The HHS Strategic Plan 2015-2019, Path to Excellence. It resonates with several of the key objectives – “Excellence in patient and family centred care,” “Excellence in service delivery through innovation, research and lifelong learning,” and “Implement integrated governance systems that transform the delivery of healthcare excellence now and in the future.”

b. The Australian Council of Healthcare Standards (ACHS). To achieve compliance against standard 1 of the National Safety and Quality Healthcare Standards (NSQHS) West Moreton needs to “implement well-designed, valid and reliable patient experience feedback mechanisms and use these to evaluate the health service performance”. The ACHS accreditation standards outline minimum standards, which we aim to exceed with this strategy.

c. The Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy 2015-2017, Partnering with Consumers and our community. This strategy is pitched at a higher level, to understand the community’s needs, priorities and expectations. Feedback forms part of this strategy, but again at a higher aggregate level that the Patient Feedback Strategy.

d. The Quality Improvement Strategy and its focus on Patient and Family centred care and co-design. A sound feedback system should identify and help prioritise the quality improvement programs for an organisation.

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\(^2\) While this strategy is titled Patient Feedback, it also includes feedback from families and careers.
Principles underpinning West Moreton’s approach to patient feedback

**Quality is central to everything we do:** we need to make sure that every contact with a patient counts towards delivering the highest-quality services.

**All in:** Patient feedback will be modelled and supported by all levels of the organisation, from the Board and CE to frontline staff and from every employment stream. We seek to actively engage with staff to formulate feedback topics and be involved in making changes.

**Well planned and regular:** Patient feedback will become a part of everyday business, embedded within the patient journey.

**Every patient:** West Moreton is a diverse and vibrant community. We will seek to understand what really matters to patients about their care experience, across all patient groups, ages, and cultures.

**Measurable:** Asking patients in a systematic way about their experiences allows us to measure the impact of improvements made over time.

**Multi-pronged and timely:** No single method will give us all the information we need to improve services. We will seek information about the care experience as close to the episode of care as possible in order to truly understand the context of the patient’s care. This will be in addition to other feedback mechanisms such as the compliments and complaints process.

**Responsive and accountable:** Feedback by itself is of little value. We will close the loop on patient feedback by deciding how best to respond to the feedback received, for every patient, every time. This will demonstrate that we need and value their feedback.

**Transparent:** We will share the feedback received and how we responded, with our patients, our staff, and our community. This will demonstrate our commitment to our community that we are being led by their experiences.

A promise to learn – a commitment to act

*Berwick 2013*
Benefits of patient feedback

There are various reasons to seek feedback from patients:

a. to understand current problems in care delivery, and design quality improvement initiatives to address them
b. to monitor the impact of quality improvement initiatives
c. to allow benchmarking against peer organisations
d. to demonstrate accountability to the public and taxpayers

There are a range of benefits in collecting and using patient feedback:

- It helps to improve communication between patients and staff
- It builds trust and confidence in WMHHS
- It can inform service improvement efforts
- It helps the organisation to provide accessible and responsive services based on people’s identified needs and desires
- It helps patients and their families to shape the services that they use.

The act of eliciting patient feedback says to patients that we:

- Need and value their views
- Are actively looking at how we are doing and striving to do better
- Are open and honest, which builds trust

There are benefits to staff in being attentive to patient feedback. It says:

- That we acknowledge that you come to work to do a good job and provide a good experience to patients
- We will provide you with the skills to analyse and interpret feedback.
- We will support you to improve service
What is patient feedback and how do you obtain it?

Patient feedback consists of the views and opinions of patients and service users on the care they have experienced. Patient feedback can be gathered in a variety of ways including both quantitative and qualitative feedback.

“Gathering the views of patients and service users is more complex than it may initially appear.”

Quantitative patient feedback

Patient experience surveys ask service users specific factual questions about what happened to them during their recent healthcare experience.

For example, ‘reporting’ style questions such as:

“Did a member of staff tell you about medication side effects to watch for when you went home?”

Traditional ‘satisfaction’ or ‘rating’ style questions, such as:

“Overall, how would you rate the care you received?”

are considered less useful because they do not provide a clear indication of what needs to be done to improve care. For instance, knowing that 15% of patients rate the service as ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ gives few clues about where to start to make the service better. Having more precise information about what went wrong, such as 23% of patients not being given an understandable explanation of their test results, is much more helpful when setting priorities for improvement.

Surveys can be conducted in a number of ways – by mail (though experience shows low response rates are the norm), by phone (which requires considerable human resources) or electronically via online surveys or by using hand-held electronic devices. Surveys can also be conducted at different times in the patient journey, at outpatient clinics, prior to discharge or after discharge from hospital.

Patient experience surveys are the best method of gathering feedback when you want to know the views of a large number of people. They allow you to study patterns and trends and to see how common certain experiences are. They show if a problem is occurring more or less frequently over time and the types of people who seem most likely to experience it.

Department of Health patient experience surveys.

The Queensland Patient Safety Unit (PSU) has purchased a license from the Picker Institute UK to use its surveys in Queensland. This is a well reputed organisation in the field of patient and family centred care (http://www.pickereurope.org/). The PSU conducts State-wide patient and family experience surveys targeting healthcare consumers from four areas: Outpatients, Maternity, Emergency and Rural Hospitals. These are Computer Aided Telephone Interviews (CATI) conducted through an agency, where a representative calls consumers and conducts a scripted interview while recording the responses. These surveys are conducted and reported on annually.

By surveying consistently and systematically these large surveys build up a detailed picture of patients’ experiences. Regularly repeating the same type of survey enables changes over time to be monitored and performance compared.

State surveys are valuable because they allow you to compare results locally against the performance of similar organisations. The results also enable regulators and policy makers to examine individual organisations and overall performance across the country. However, they are limited in terms of quality improvement as the results of such surveys are often delayed by months and they are less likely to engage local staff.

Overall patient experience surveys provide useful information because they highlight precisely where the problems are, and what needs to be done to improve particular elements of patient care. However, such surveys can take a long time to both gather and analyse the data. There is growing interest in surveys that collect and process data in close to real time. Technology is available to collect this data while the patient is in hospital, at an outpatient appointment or visiting the GP.

Currently WMHHS does not conduct any quantitative surveys.

Qualitative patient feedback methods

Surveys highlight key areas of improvement but whilst they tell you what people think and experience they do not necessarily tell you why they feel that way.

Other approaches to gathering patient feedback can provide you with additional information to explore the issues raised by surveys in greater depth and help explain the reasons behind peoples’ experiences and behaviours. These include a number of strategies including focus groups, interviews and patient panels (see table).

Table. Quantitative versus Qualitative methods

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative methods</th>
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<td>Postal surveys</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
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<td>Face-to-face surveys</td>
<td>Discovery interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone surveys (interviewer administered)</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
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<td>Automated telephone surveys</td>
<td>Web-based feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online surveys using web-based or email questionnaires</td>
<td>Complaints and compliments</td>
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<td>Surveys on hand-held devices</td>
<td>Patient diaries</td>
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<td>Surveys using touch-screen kiosks</td>
<td>Mystery shopping</td>
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<td>Surveys using bedside terminals</td>
<td>Customer journey mapping/patient shadowing</td>
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<td>Exit cards</td>
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No single methodology will give an organisation all the information that it needs to support service improvement, so this framework suggests a multimodal approach to patient feedback.

**Establishing a patient feedback improvement system**

The value of collecting feedback is realised when it helps clinical and management teams identify aspects of their service that need to improve, so that the team can take appropriate action. To do this, WMHHS needs to establish clear organisational processes for coordinating data collection, analysis, dissemination, and service improvement.

The Picker Institute recommends taking a systematic approach to gathering patient feedback:

1. set clear goals – be clear about the information you want, whether it be examining the experiences of people with long term conditions, understanding the needs of minority groups or other objectives
2. identify relevant stakeholders – be clear about who will have an interest and be affected by your plans
3. decide who you want to gather feedback from – identify the groups of patients or users you want to reach
4. secure adequate resources – ensure you have sufficient funds to invest in these skilled tasks
5. choose the most appropriate methods – be clear which techniques are right for your task, eg patient surveys, focus groups, mystery shopping or other activities
6. consider how you will act on the feedback gathered – define ‘before and after’ measures to evaluate the impact of any changes made.

One of the key skills that WMHHS will need to develop is the ability to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data to identify key themes and messages – to triangulate information from different data sources to ensure that conclusions are sound.

**Framework for patient feedback**

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<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gather patient feedback regularly and systematically</td>
<td>We will improve our ability to obtain feedback from our patients on their care experience</td>
<td>Develop annual plan for collecting feedback for set goals and identified patient groups Identify preferred methods to obtain feedback and secure adequate resources Improve staff capability to obtain feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyse feedback to identify opportunities for improvement</td>
<td>Organised analysis of feedback</td>
<td>Prioritised action plans for improvement incorporated into 90 day plans</td>
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<th>Priority</th>
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<tr>
<td>Develop action plans</td>
<td>We will proactively use patient feedback to drive improvements</td>
<td>Support staff to make changes in care provision</td>
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<td>Develop a process to feedback to patients and the community what changes we make</td>
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<td>Measure progress in improving care</td>
<td>We will demonstrate our commitment to providing high quality care through ongoing reporting and monitoring of feedback over time</td>
<td>Establish West Moreton Office of the Patient Experience for ongoing reporting and monitoring of all sources of feedback</td>
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<td>Share results widely</td>
<td>We will strive to understand what our patients are telling us</td>
<td>Develop process for dissemination of feedback with patients and staff at all levels of the organisation</td>
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<td>Improve staff capability to respond effectively to feedback</td>
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1. Gather patient feedback regularly and systematically
2. Share results widely
3. Analyse feedback to identify opportunities for improvement
4. Develop action plans
5. Measure progress

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