



Secondary analysis of
qualitative responses:
Brief summary of
findings

Background to the project:

Over 40,000 qualitative comments were received in response to the 2017 and 2018 National Inpatient Experience Surveys. These comments contained rich information on how patients perceived the care they received in hospital and where they felt it could be improved. In order to get a deeper understanding of these comments and how they could be used to improve care, the National Care Experience Programme (NCEP) worked with a team based in NUIG, led by Dr Adegboyega Ojo.

How were the comments analysed?

The NUIG team used a combination of traditional qualitative analysis methods, as well as data mining and machine learning techniques to identify the key activities, resources, contexts within the comments. The team then used complex statistical models to quantify how each of these factors were associated with positive and negative patient experiences.

What were the key findings?

Of the 42,933 comments analysed, 47.1% of the comments described positive experiences, 49.8% described negative experiences and 3.1% gave suggestions for improvement.

The key factors that contributed to patients reporting positive care experiences included:

- Staff attentiveness and responses to patients needs while on the ward
- Staff providing high-quality care to patients
- A sense that staff of all types went beyond the call of duty
- The provision of high-quality meals to patients.

These factors were associated with positive experiences across all gender, ethnic and age groups.

The key factors that related to negative patient experiences included:

- Limited menu options and low-quality of meals served
- Issues with discharge procedures including lack of information and waiting times
- Shortage of facilities, in particular shortage of beds
- Hygiene issues, including cleanliness in toilets

- Inadequate care on the ward, including issues relating to privacy
- Long waiting times for emergency care
- Apparent understaffing and overworked staff
- Perceived overcrowding in wards and noise during the night.

Patients provided numerous suggestions for improvement, including:

- Providing more staff to focus on patient care
- Improving the quality, variety and timing of food provision
- Allowing patients and their families more time to discuss their care with hospital staff
- Making a more comfortable environment for patients, including reducing noise at night
- Ensuring facilities such as bathrooms are kept clean and in good repair
- Providing sufficient beds to avoid lengthy stays on a trolley
- Ensuring patients who require extra assistance are helped with their meals and medication.

The issues highlighted by patients in their comments were broadly consistent between 2017 and 2018, though there was a higher proportion of positive comments in 2018 which suggests that there were improvements in patient care over time.

What does this mean for patients and care providers?

While some of the issues highlighted such as trolleys and staff numbers would require significant time and investment to address, many of the issues highlighted by this analysis are less intractable. For example, provision of high-quality, varied hospital meals consistently predicted positive patient experiences. Other areas such as cleanliness, communication and information-sharing could provide relatively straight-forward avenues for improving patients' experiences in hospital.

What's next?

The NCEP team will publish the findings of the NUIG analysis and provide access to an interactive dashboard to allow hospital personnel to work with the data relevant to their specific hospital.



National Care Experience Programme

