

# Socioeconomic tips of the month

**Q.** Our practice is in the process of creating a study to measure the quality of service provided to our surgical patients. What factors should we take into consideration when developing a patient satisfaction survey?

**A.** A positive byproduct of managed care is the patient satisfaction survey. Survey responses can be key to discovering what patients appreciate about a practice, what areas need improvement, and how patients perceive the quality of care they receive. Remember, while quality of care affects patient satisfaction and long-term loyalty, patient satisfaction is largely a result of multiple encounters with physicians and staff over a period of time.

One survey technique worth considering is the in-office evaluation. An in-office survey is worthwhile because it measures patients' immediate impressions.

Another method is to give patients the survey form as they leave the office. Some practices may find that their patients will be more frank if they can respond to the survey in the privacy of their homes. In either case, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to assure the return of the completed form. Consider color coding the surveys by physician, department, or type of patient.

With competition intensifying, many surgeons and practice administrators/managers look at their already full schedules and may ignore patient satisfaction and focus on other matters. Consider the impact on a practice when new patients go elsewhere due to lack of appointment time or because the physician is generally behind schedule. Continuous efforts should be made to strengthen patient relationships and satisfaction. This will, in turn, convert indifferent patients into loyal ones. Monetary losses will be significant if all dissatisfied new patients do not return. Surgical practices will find satisfied patients maintain their appointments, meet their financial obligations, disregard when the physician is running late, refer their friends/colleagues to your practice. Moreover, satisfied patients are less likely to take legal action against a physician.

In addition, consider having the office staff and physicians complete a survey. These results

## Patient satisfaction survey

At Midwest Surgical Associates, we want to know what you think. Please take the time to complete this survey so we will know what our office is doing right and what areas need improvement. Your responses will remain anonymous. Please complete and return this survey to our office. Thank you!

1. When phoning the office for an appointment, the staff is (check all that apply):

- Efficient
- Polite
- Indifferent
- Rude

2. Did you have any difficulty scheduling your recent office visit?

- Yes
- No

3. Are our office hours convenient?

- Yes
- No

4. How would you rate your satisfaction with your recent office visit?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Dissatisfied

5. How long did you wait to see the physician?

Minutes

Do you think this time was:

- Acceptable
- Unacceptable

*continued on next page*

## Patient satisfaction survey, continued

6. Did your surgeon thoroughly explain your diagnosis and explain the proposed treatment plan?

Yes  
 No

7. Did you have enough opportunity to ask the physician/nurse questions?

Physician:	Nurse:
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> No

8. Did the physician/staff respond to your questions thoroughly?

Physician:	Staff:
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> No

9. When calling to speak with your surgeon or the nurse, did they respond to your call in a timely manner?

Physician:	Nurse:
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> No

10. Is our billing staff knowledgeable about your insurance plan, applicable copayments, etc.?

Yes  
 No

Please tell us how we can improve:

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can be compared to that of the patient, which will give everyone a clear understanding of how well the office is tuned into patient satisfaction.

A sample patient satisfaction survey appears beginning on the previous page. More questions can be adapted to fit the needs of individual practices (e.g., office appearance, parking accommodations, location of office, and so forth). After the surveys are returned, tabulate the responses and share them with your staff during your weekly staff meeting. Inform patients of results and changes through the practice brochure, monthly newsletter, etc. This survey should be performed on a six- to 12-month basis to monitor improvement in practice performance. [Q](#)

“Socioeconomic tips of the month” responds to questions from Fellows and their staffs, and provides useful tips for surgical practices. Developed by College staff and consultants, this information will be accessible on our Web site for easy retrieval and future access. If there are topics you would like to see addressed in future columns, please contact the Chicago staff of the Health Policy and Advocacy Department, tel. 312/202-5150; fax 312/202-5021; or e-mail [socioecon@facs.org](mailto:socioecon@facs.org).