

## The Survey of Hospitals Managers' Attitude about Patient Complaints Investigating System in Hospitals Affiliated to Mashhad University of Medical Sciences

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article type:</b> Original Article</p> <hr/> <p><b>Article history:</b> Received: 7-July-2015 Accepted: 28-July-2015</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Attitude Complaints investigating Management Patient</p>	<p><b>Introduction:</b> According to the importance of managers' role in improving quality of health services, we performed this study to survey hospital managers attitude about patient complaints investigating system in hospitals affiliated to Mashhad university of Medical sciences in 2015.</p> <p><b>Materials and Methods:</b> This descriptive cross-sectional study was performed in 12 hospitals affiliated to Mashhad University of Medical Sciences. One questionnaire that we had confirmed the reliability and validity of that was used to assess hospitals managers' attitude about patient complaints investigating system. Study population was all hospital managers in all levels. We studied them as census. Finally 130 completed questionnaires were analyzed with SPSS Version 16.</p> <p><b>Results:</b> 20% of managers assessed the current status of patient complaints investigating system as improper. 35% of manager expressed not using information that derived from patients' complaint as most defect in patient complaints investigating system. 60% of managers believed that the most impact of reinforcement patient complaints investigating system is improvement of services quality and system validity. Finally 56% of managers expressed staff dissatisfaction is the great reason for patient complaints.</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> According to the findings and relatively positive attitude of managers, it is necessary to organize a team for improving and revising patient complaints investigating system in each hospital. Also managers' attention to staff satisfaction and their educational needs is important for reducing patient complaints.</p>

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### Introduction

One of the main goals of all health centers and hospitals is to meet the needs of customers and satisfy them (1).

Attention to patients' rights means defending the rights of patients and ensuring them about performing adequate care, which leads to improved communication between patients and health care providers and improving the quality of these services (2). On the other hand, failure to respect the patients' rights and their dissatisfaction from the provided services also leads to slow process of recovery, increased hospital stay, irritability, increased costs of treatment and ultimately patient's complaints (3). Complaint is a tool

for expressing dissatisfaction that needs to answering and investigating (4). Complaint reflects only a small portion of dissatisfaction from health care system and perhaps shows only the tip of the iceberg summit (5).

Due to increased access to modern information system as well as increasing the level of education and general training, participating of the patients and their families in the process of health care and treatment of their disease with an active role in clinical decision making have been increased. Therefore, the rate of complaints about the quality of health care has significantly increased (6). Thus, the emphasis on the evaluation of patients' expectations and complaints is

one of the basic tools to manage the supervision on the performance of health service providers' centers and hospitals (7).

With extracting the needed information about the complaints, we can evaluate the quality of services and eliminate the weakness points with compensation of deficiencies (8). In addition, investigating the complaints works as a safety valve to increase the quality of health care, increased attention and accuracy of the physicians, increased their knowledge and increased the quality of new skills and be effective in creating a better and more friendly behavior with patients, reducing the heavy diagnostic and therapeutic cost, and ultimately maintain and promote the sanctity of medical community (9).

Investigating the complaints is not the duty of only a particular part of the organization, but also all members of the organization should try to effectively handle the complaints, improve the quality of complaints management, acceptance and application of lessons learned from complaints, hear the views of service users, learning from their mistakes, and continuous attempt to improve the quality of their services.

Successful offering of the needed services of who refer to the hospital depends on that the service providers (at all levels) "bound" themselves to meet the needs of who refer to the hospital and know their "responsibility" to provide the best services in the shortest time (10).

Since today, investigating the complaints is considered as a critical component of the health care system in order to improve the standards of health care (8), and the managers in addition to the acceptance or refusal of complaints, should consider any complaint as a valuable opportunity to find a way to improve the quality of services which the patients receive (11).

So, the necessity of development and proper implementation of the management system of investigating the complaints leading to increased patient satisfaction, and ultimately enhancing the quality of the organization services is to have good management and applying the efficient policies according to the facilities and the budget allocated to the organization. Therefore, considering the importance of the role of managers in the process of improving performance and service delivery, this study was performed with aim to evaluate the attitudes of managers of hospitals affiliated to Mashhad University of Medical Sciences toward the patient complaints investigating system in 2014.

## Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional study was performed in 12 public hospitals affiliated to Mashhad University of Medical Sciences in 2014. To collect data, a questionnaire was developed which evaluated the hospitals administrators' attitudes toward the patient complaints investigating system. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part includes

demographic data and the second part contained 5 questions related to the administrators' attitudes toward patient complaints investigating system. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by 5 experts in this field. The reliability of the questionnaire was also confirmed by distribution of the questionnaire among 15 senior executives of the hospital as pilot confirmed (Cronbach's alpha of 0.84).

The study population was all senior and middle managers (including the chief of the hospital, the director of the hospital, the deputy of the hospital, matron, supervisors and hospitals metron.) employing in all the hospitals of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences who were studied as census. Among the participants, those who were not present at their work environment during the study and after three times of researcher's referring who did not complete the questionnaire were excluded. After collecting the questionnaires, SPSS software Version 16 was used to analyze the data.

## Results

Among 150 questionnaires distributed between the managers, a total of 130 questionnaires were considered as full questionnaire. 57.7% of managers participating in the study were female and the other was male. Most people were in the age group of 41 to 50 years with 15 years of work experience and the education level of most people was bachelor. Demographic characteristics of the study population are presented in Table 1.

**Table1: Demographic characteristics of the study population**

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	%	
Gender	Male	57	42/2
	Female	78	57/7
Age (years)	20 to 30	6	4/44
	31 to 40	25	18/52
	41 to 50	90	66/67
	> 50	14	10/38
Work history (years)	<5	3	2/2
	5-10	23	17
	10-15	24	17/8
	>15	85	63
Educational level	Bachelor	109	80/7
	M.Sc.	14	10/4
	PhD and above	6	4/4
	Expert	6	4/4

According to Figure1, more managers had relative awareness toward patient complaints investigating system.

From the view of 80% of the managers, the current status of toward patient complaints investigating system was good, while 20% rated it poor. 35% of managers believed that no use of complaints' data was the most important problem in patient complaints

investigating system. 31% of managers stated that policy and planning in this regard is the most important problem. Others cases were at average and lower problematic cases from the perspective of the managers (Figure 2).

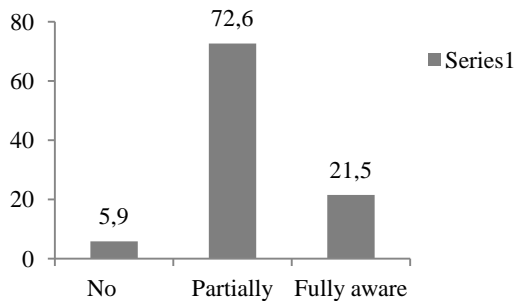


Figure1: The hospitals managers' awareness about patient complaints.

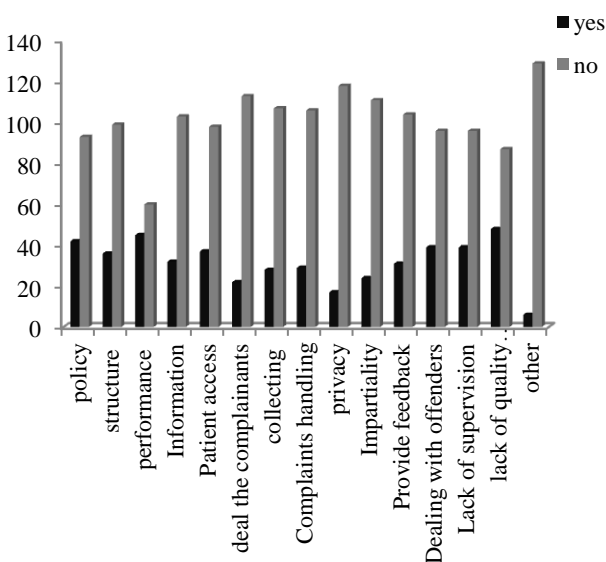


Figure2: the hospitals managers' attitude about patient complaints process.

In the area of questions related to the effects of the strengthening and reorganization of patient complaints investigating system, most managers considered some cases, so that, nearly 60% of managers believed that strengthening and reorganization of patient complaints investigating system can play an important role in improving the quality of services and credibility of the health care system, and from the perspective of 52%, improving patient complaints investigating system can increase the confidence of users of health system services. The other cases from the perspective of the managers were moderately effective. Finally, among the most important factors affecting the increase in patient's complaints, 56% of managers chose personnel job satisfaction as the most important factor and 52% reported no application of continuing education courses as the effective factor.

## Discussion

Data analysis of this study show that the majority of managers stated that no use of complaint data (35%) and lack of proper policymaking and planning (31%) are as the most important problem in the process of investigating the patients' complaints. It should be noted that complaints can have a negative effect on people and organizations providing health care, the sense of anger against the patient, despair, doubt about clinical competency, and fear of legal complaints could jeopardize the quality of care (4). In addition, doctors and other members of the hospital unintentionally behave with a little ruff with the patients who express dissatisfaction that it seems the necessary training to health service staff can be somewhat effective in solving this problem (12-14).

On the other hand, complaint can provide feedback to clinicians about their performance and use of complaints data can create an opportunity to identify weaknesses and correcting the mistakes and satisfaction of dissatisfied customers and can be effective on their future attitude and behavior. It is clear that with the identification of weaknesses, the quality of services in organizations would increase and this increases the level of patients' satisfaction, increasing the customers' confidence and ultimately improves the system reliability. That's why today, investigating the complaint and use of its data is considered as essential part of the health care delivery system (14-18).

Information obtained from complains give the opportunity to the staff to evaluate the performance of the hospital staff which the patients will expect.

Another measure that would connect patient complaints investigating system to the cycle of improving the hospital quality can be a copy of the patient's expectations as a form of assessing the views. At the University of Queensland, a questionnaire was developed on the same basis which evaluate the meeting of patient's expectations in the hospital. In this method, complaint is used as a retrospective measure and satisfaction questionnaire is used as effective measures in the future (19). Wright and Hill state that to fix the problems and patients' dissatisfaction, we need to collect statistics, statistics tells us the problems (11). The proper policies to reduce the complaints is of the most important duties of the managers that ultimately can increase public confidence to the system. In another study, every complaint is considered as a valuable opportunity to find a way to improve the quality of service which the patients receive (20-24). However, creating patient complaints investigating system in different countries and considering the provisions as patient's rights in these systems show that patient's rights not only in Iran but also in many countries is not fully and seriously implemented, because complaints are increasing (25).

According to the results obtained of this study and comparison with the studies mentioned above, it seems

that two basic problems are related together in the process of investigating the complaints from the perspective of managers (the inability to use complaints data and the lack of proper policy and planning), therefore, it is recommended that the attempts should be made with correct selection of qualified managers and passing the management courses and appropriate training to raise the managers' awareness of patient's rights and the use of complaints data as a useful step to improve the quality of health care system.

In another part of the research from the perspective of managers, the most important effects of the strengthening and reorganization of the system of investigating the patients' complaints are improving the service quality and credibility of the system (59.3%), gaining the confidence of users of health services to the system (52.6%), and increasing the patients' satisfaction (45.9%). Many studies have been done in this regard. In the study of Bental and colleagues, it is stated that the strengthening of patient complaints investigating system and attention to the patients' views to reduce complaints along with excellent service has led to gain the patients' confidence to medical centers, and increased the possibility of his return for future services and makes the patient to suggest the hospital to others, that finally, these factors lead to long-term success and credibility of the system. In this study, verbal effect of satisfied or dissatisfied patients on the view of other clients is very high and negative verbal statements of dissatisfied customers will undermine the credibility of a health center (19).

In the study of Jafari Kelarijani, more production and offer of goods and services is likened to the role of strategic weapons in the political life of the nations, and it is emphasized that efficient use of resources and customer satisfaction and changing the policy of organization from product-oriented to customer-oriented and improving the quality of provided services automatically increase the credibility of the organization (26). For this reason, patients' satisfaction is an important indicator in health care quality and one of the most important sectors in the areas of health care accreditation (27).

According to the obtained results, to strengthen and organize patient complaints investigating system, it is required to use the assistance of specialists familiar with workflow of several parts of the hospital who had good public communication. Also, an explicit instruction, adherence of the hospitals' officials and staff, creation and deployment of an observer team and specialist in the hospitals will be helpful to completely and accurately implement the patient rights and patient complaints investigating system to strengthen and organize this system.

At the last part of this research, the managers expressed that the most important factors affecting the increase in patients' complaints were personnel job dissatisfaction (56.3%), insufficiency of continuous education courses (52.2%) and a large number of

patients than staff (51.1%). In this context, the performed studies showed that job dissatisfaction creates a vicious cycle in care system, so that it can cause turnover and a lack of power. This increases the wear and staff workloads (28). In the study of Golchin that the personnel job satisfaction was too high, it is reported that whatever the level of job satisfaction from their work environment increases, the possibility of desertion, absence and escape from organization decreases and their commitment increases (29).

In other studies, using a sufficient number of personnel, reduction of working hours, physical and mental protection of them, use of the social scientist beside the nurses, prevention of unnecessary admissions and reducing the costs are the main factors in increased staff and patients' satisfaction and obtaining their trust and ultimately improving the health system reliability (29-33). Luthans also reported that the staff who have more job satisfaction, they have better physical and mental health, and sooner learn the new training and skills related to work and are faced with less occupational events (34).

Comparison of the studies shows that staff job motivations are various in different societies and periods and with respect to economic, political, social and cultural status of each community. Therefore, with selection of competent and well-trained managers and correctly and efficiently planning, we should try to increase the staff satisfaction, and ultimately health system efficiency. As in various studies, the impact of continuous training on the staff performance and the rate of received complaints have been proven. For example, Flores and Barba stated that participation in continuous training program directly affects the performance of nurses and increase productivity, reduce occupational hazards, reducing medical errors, improve the organizational climate and increased satisfaction (35, 36). With regard to this issue, it is needed that the managers plan for in-service training and continuing education of health care staff to improve their performance and reduce complaints.

Among the limitations of the study was the lack of cooperation of all the managers and from 150 questionnaires that were distributed among the managers, 130 questionnaires were considered as complete questionnaire. But one of the strengths of this study was to compare the attitudes of the managers about patient complaints investigating system that all the studies that have been done in this area investigated the complaints statistics and no study has been done in this regard.

## Conclusion

Based on the obtained results and the relatively favorable attitudes of managers toward the role of patient complaints investigating system, it is necessary to form a team in the hospital consisted of experts familiar with the work processes of different parts of the hospital and review the methods of improving



patient complaints investigating system. Also, it is required that the managers pay attention to improve personnel job satisfaction and their training and welfare needs to reduce patients' complaints. However, this study investigated the system of patients' complaints from the perspective of hospitals' managers. Further studies in this regard is needed to examine the views of other staff and patients regarding the system of patients' complaints in order to obtain more comprehensive view

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