

Patients' Expectations of Doctors and Nurses on Healthcare Delivery within Ibadan Metropolis

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Abstract

This study investigated hospital patients' expectations of doctors and nurses in Ibadan. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. Five (5) research questions were raised and answered in the study. A total of 180 hospital patients randomly selected from six hospitals in Ibadan participated in the study. Participants responded to a researcher-developed instrument, titled the "Healthcare Expectations of Patients Assessment Scale - HEPAS" ($r = 0.95$). The instrument was divided into six sections of A, B, C, D, E and F with a total of 50 items. Each item was assigned a value of 2: Agree; and 1: Disagree. Data were analysed using simple percentages. The results revealed that hospital patients expected doctors and nurses to be professionally competent before they attend to patients; that these hospital patients expected a lot of positive behavioural characteristics from the doctors and nurses like comprehensive care; that doctor/nurse-patient relationship remains a high expectation among hospital patients; that hospital patients expected comprehensive information and education regarding their ailments and healthcare from the doctors and nurses; and that hospital patients expected doctors and nurses to be available on duty always. It is recommended that since meeting the needs and expectations of the patients from doctors and nurses is one of the basic issues in patient care, all efforts need to be put in place to ensure improved patient care, and awareness about patients' needs and expectations should be embarked upon towards meeting their expectations.

Key Words: Hospital patients, Patients' expectations, expectations of doctors, expectations of nurses

Introduction

Globally, patients expect so much from healthcare providers (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, among others) as healthcare providers play critical roles in patients' care. There has been an increased recognition of the fact that healthcare delivery needs to be focused more on the patient. According to Choksi, Schectman and Agarwal (2013), many innovations highlight patient-centeredness as a primary goal in healthcare delivery. Researchers (Bendapudi, Berry & Frey, 2006; Smeltzer & Bare, 2010; Afemikhe, 2011; Ogunfowokan & Mora, 2012; Greene, 2012; Kalyani, Sharif, Ahmadi & Iman, 2013; Campbell, 2014; Wen & Turker, 2015) have been concerned over addressing the question: "what do patients really want from healthcare providers?" Thus, understanding and meeting the patients' expectations should be the main objectives of the healthcare providers towards achieving efficient care. Health researchers (Chunta, 2009; Smeltzer & Bare, 2010; Manary, Boulding & Staelin, 2013) have noticed patients' expectations over medical care, and its high time this was given much required attention.

Many factors may determine the expectations of patients from the doctors and nurses. According to Kalyani, Sharif, Ahmadi and Iman (2013), patients' expectations are affected by their culture, beliefs, attitude, and amount of knowledge. Patients' expectation does not imply patients' satisfaction with the provided services, as patients may express a high level of satisfaction while

their expectations have not been completely met (Ogaji, Ekechuku, Agbayi, Dekpen and Mezie-Okoye, 2016). Thus, meeting the patients' expectations from care providers is far beyond providing their satisfaction (Kalyani, Sharif, Ahmadi & Iman, 2013).

When people have reasons to seek medical help, they require someone that is competent by virtue of training received to offer them medical assistance. Doctors and nurses are always the focus when hospital patients are seeking medical assistance. Schattner, Rudin and Jellin (2004) lay credence to the importance of competency, patience and attentiveness as priorities among doctors and nurses to deserve being consulted by patients. Wensing, Jung, Mainz, Olesen and Grol (1998) also found that most desirable issues for doctors and nurses were competency, joint decision-making, and time spared for the patient. Patients may also appreciate the physician consult his colleagues when his own skill or knowledge falls short along the course of care. Also, there is growing recognition that doctors are expected to be conscious of the cost of their recommendations (Weinberger, 2011) and awareness by patients that more tests and treatments may not result in a better outcome (Wen, 2013). There is growing evidence that people, even those who do not have active medical concerns, want their doctors to evaluate and to explain the necessity of interventions (Powers, Navathe & Aung, 2013).

As patients expect to find competent doctors and nurses in the hospitals, their expectations start to

grow beyond competency to the behavioural characteristics of the doctors and nurses to attend to them. Moreover, paying attention to the patients, meeting the patients' needs and communication were the index of doctors' and nurses' competency from the patients' point of view. Most patients desire doctors and nurses who listen, care, and explain issues to patients. Studies (Renzi, Abeni & Picard, 2001; Bendapudi, Berry & Frey, 2006; Greene, 2012) show that when choosing doctors, patients concentrate on empathy and ability to provide clear explanations. From the patients' point of view, paying more attention to their affairs by the nurses induces the feeling that they care more about their duties. Patients expect the nurses to feel responsible toward them and, in addition to performing their treatment and care duties, respect their privacy and rights. In a submission by Fakhr-Movahedi, Salsali, Negarandeh and Rahnavard (2011), a responsible and committed nurse is the one who pays special attention to the patients and provides them with a different type of care from others. Hunt (1999) also report that patients want an experienced, intelligent, and skillful nurse who considers all their needs and helps to take care of them all the time.

Patients want to relate well with doctors and nurses who create enabling environments for them to pour out their minds, an assurance of hope and succour. In fact, this is an impetus for a good doctor/nurse-patient relationship. Doctor/nurse-patient relationship ranked high in the list of patients' expectations (Baron-Epel, Dushenat & Friedman, 2001; Ogden & Jain, 2005). According to Wen (2014), patients place strong emphasis on a good doctor-patient relationship. This may mean that patients' expectations may include that they be allowed to select and keep their doctors. According to Ogaji et al (2016), appropriate relationship with the patients is almost the most important expectation of the patients from the care givers. Lotzkar (2001) believes that the short-term rotations and duty shifts have the tendency to disrupt relationship between doctor/nurse and the patients.

Noohi and Pouraboli (2008) add that patients have high level of educational expectations and tendency to gain information from the nurses. Patients also expect their doctors to provide them with relevant information and to listen to them patiently. Unfortunately, relevant information for the patient is rarely planned and performed as a formal process, but is mostly carried out informally during the nursing care and the patients' activities

(Jamshidi, Abbaszadeh, Kalyani & Sharif, 2013). Nurses are expected to examine the patients and identify their needs and, according to their needs, prioritize, plan, perform and assess the patient training programmes based on their level of education, culture and facilities (Kalyani, Sharif, Ahmadi & Iman, 2013). In fact, the most important expectation of these patients was education which was highly effective in reducing their fear, anxiety, and discomfort (Hunt, 1999).

Patients will always expect to find doctors and nurses available in the hospitals even if the patients are making unscheduled visits to the hospital. When one desperately requires medical attention, other things become unimportant as the patient expect to enter the doctor's office immediately, unhindered and without spending any minute in the waiting lounge. Camacho, Anderson and Safrit (2006) report that patients lament over the inconvenience of wasting much time at a doctor's office to consult the doctor. In Nigeria, patients have limited access to physicians as doctor/patient ratio is poor for an efficient healthcare delivery. Studies (Molazem, Ahmadi, Mohammadi & Bolandparvaz, 2011; Kalyani, Sharif, Ahmadi & Iman, 2013) have shown that the patients expect the nurses to be available in the hospital always and to spend time for their care. Patients always consider the nurses' empathy and caring presence by their bedside as a primary right. According to Molazem et al (2011), the presence of the nurses by the patients' bedside leads to the patients feeling of security and tranquillity. Nurses' immediate responses to call alarm is also a main issue that can lead to the patients' peace of mind (Molazem et al. 2011; Kalyani et al., 2013). The nurses' presence could have a positive effect on the patients, including reduction of fear and stress, confidence, and security. Also, spending even a short time in speaking with the patients decreases the negative consequences of lack of relationship, such as the patients' dissatisfaction, anxiety, and anger (Kalyani et al., 2013). Caring presence of the nurses is one of the major dimensions of actual care from the patients' point of view. With regards to the gap in previous studies and also need to exploring this issue in the sociocultural context of Nigeria, the current study investigated the Nigerian patients' expectations from nurses and nursing care; the results can be used in order to improve the quality of nursing care and education in Nigeria healthcare setting.

Statement of the Problem

There is a kind of agitations for the hospital patients' expectations of doctors' and nurses' roles in healthcare delivery. The Nigerian public wake up to hear the news of fake medics discovered in our hospitals, patients get to the hospitals to find doctors and nurses on industrial strike, some of these doctors and nurses do not know how to address their patients with honour and dignity, and also often fail to make the patients aware of realities of their health. These patients are registering their dissatisfactions over their experiences with the doctors and nurses and are claiming that what happens in the hospitals are far from their expectations. Many that have gone to the hospital for medical consultation and treatment often come back grumbling and complaining over their unexpected experiences in the hands of the healthcare providers. The question: "what do patients really want from healthcare from doctors and nurses?" has not been fully resolved for some time now. Studies (Bendapudi, Berry & Frey, 2006; Smeltzer & Bare, 2010; Afemikhe, 2011; Ogunfowokan & Mora, 2012; Greene, 2012; Kalyani, Sharif, Ahmadi & Iman, 2013; Campbell; 2014; Wen & Turker, 2015) have examined various agitations from patients and patients' family supports though, none has addressed patients' expectations of these doctors and nurses in the African setting. For this reason, there is the need to investigate the various patients' expectations of hospital doctors and nurses in the yearnings for adequate healthcare amidst various stumbling blocks. Meanwhile, identifying these expectations from the viewpoint of patients is the only way to help doctors, nurses and other healthcare members to pay attention to these expectations in planning care.

Research Questions

The five research questions raised and answered in the study were:

- 1) **What is the expectation of patients on job competency from doctors and nurses?**
- 2) **What is the expectation of patients on behavioural characteristics from doctors and nurses?**
- 3) **What is the expectation of patients on good relationship with doctors and nurses?**
- 4) **Do hospital patients in Ibadan expect doctors and nurses to educate them always regarding their health conditions and cure procedures?**
- 5) **Do hospital patients in Ibadan expect doctors and nurses to be available in hospitals always?**

Methods

The descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. It involved collection of data from One hundred and eighty (180) hospital patients within Ibadan metropolis. Participants responded to a researcher-developed instrument, the "Healthcare Expectations of Patients Assessment Scale (HEPAS)". The instrument was divided into six sections of A, B, C, D, E and F. Section A obtained respondent's personal information, Section B (10 items) assessed respondents' expectation of job competency of hospital doctors and nurses, Section C (10 items) assessed respondents' expectation of behavioural characteristics of hospital doctors and nurses, Section D (10 items) assessed respondents' expectation of doctors/nurses-patients relationship in the hospitals, Section E (10 items) assessed respondents' expectation of education given by doctors and nurses to patients in the hospitals, while Section F (10 items) assessed respondents' expectation of availability of doctors and nurses in the hospitals. The reliability co-efficient was determined to be 0.82. Each item was assigned a value of 2: Agree; and 1: Disagree. The instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 which indicated a high content validity and a test-retest reliability of ($r = 0.95$). The researcher used two research assistants to administer the instrument on categories of patients; those in the waiting room to see either doctor or nurse for the first time and those around within hospital complexes for follow-ups, to relate their expectations of doctors and nurses. The instruments administered were retrieved and data were analysed using simple percentages

Results

Table 1: Patients' Expectation of Job Competency among Hospital Doctors and Nurses

S/n	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	Doctors and nurse in our hospitals are expected to be qualified by training, and should not be quacks that will add to my health challenges	180(100%)	0 (0%)
2	Doctors and nurses should consult their colleagues when their own skills or knowledge falls short along the course of care	177 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)
3	A quack is not expected to get health challenges right, rather his/her focus is on financial gains from the patients	150 (83.3%)	30 (16.7%)
4	The doctors and nurses in the hospitals are expected to be emotionally balanced and know what to do	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
5	Doctors and nurses that cannot meet the patients' needs are not supposed to be in the hospitals	177 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)
6	When a patient is consulting a competent doctor, the health challenge is half-solved	175 (97.2%)	5 (2.8%)
7	With competent doctors and nurses, there is an assurance of hope and succour	158 (87.8%)	22 (12.2%)
8	Doctors need to be conscious of the cost of their recommendations	85 (47.2%)	95 (52.8%)
9	Doctors and nurses should calmly speak with patients and be reassuring	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
10	Patients want an experienced, intelligent, and skilful nurse who considers all their needs and helps to take care of them all the time.	177 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)

Table 2: Patients' Expectation of Behavioural Characteristics among Hospital Doctors and Nurses

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	Doctors and nurses are expected to deal with patients in ethical manners	175 (97.2%)	5 (2.8%)
2	Doctors and nurses are expected to be responsible for patients' healthcare	150 (83.3%)	30 (16.7%)
3	Doctors and nurses should respect the patients' rights	177 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)
4	Respecting the patients' privacy is expected from the doctors and nurses	177 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)
5	Patients desire doctors and nurses that pay attention and listen to patients	180 (100%)	0 (0%)
6	A doctor must be empathic and possess ability to provide clear explanations to patients	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
7	Doctors and nurses that pay more attention to the affairs of their patients induce the feeling that they care more about their patients	180 (100%)	0 (0%)
8	Doctors and nurses are expected to keep up-to-date records of their patients' healthcare	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
9	A nurse should be providing the patients' comfort and not causing them stress	180 (100%)	0 (0%)
10	A doctor should listen to patients and be kind to them	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)

Table 3: Patients' Expectation of Doctor/Nurse-patient relationship in the Hospitals

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	Frequent rotations and shifts make a patient to be consulting different doctors every time and this disrupts relationship between physicians and the patients	150 (83.3%)	30 (16.7%)
2	Patients expect to meet doctors who are caring and compassionate	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
3	Patients want to have pleasant interactions with other staff in the doctor's offices	165 (91.7%)	15 (8.3%)
4	Patients need to gain the trust of doctors and nurses, resulting in good relationships	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
5	A patient will be more comfortable with a doctor/nurse of the same gender	177 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)
6	Doctor/nurse-patient relationship ranked high in the list of patients' expectations	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
7	A good doctor/nurse-patient relationship can create an enabling environment for a patient to pour out his/her minds	180 (100%)	0 (0%)
8	Spending even a short time in speaking with the patients by nurses decreases the negative consequences of lack of relationship	177 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)
9	A good doctor/nurse-patient relationship is important to build trust between them	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
10	A patient will be more comfortable with a doctor/nurse with whom he/she speaks the same language	180 (100%)	0 (0%)

Table 4: Patients' Expectation of Education given by Doctors and Nurses to Patients in the Hospitals

S/n	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	Patients expect their doctors to provide them with relevant information	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
2	Patients are uncomfortable when a doctor or nurse fail to tell them the actual situation of their health challenges	180 (100%)	0 (0%)
3	Patients expect their doctors to disclose financial implications of treatments	165 (91.7%)	15 (8.3%)
4	The most important expectation of patients is education from the doctors and nurses which will reduce fear, anxiety, and discomfort	180 (100%)	0 (0%)

Table 5: Patients' Expectation of Availability of Doctors and Nurses in the Hospital

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	Patients expect to find a doctor available to attend to him/her even if the patient is making unscheduled visits to the hospital	180 (100%)	0 (0%)
2	Doctor/patient ratio should be improved upon in Nigeria for an efficient healthcare delivery	150 (83.3%)	30 (16.7%)
3	Patients are interested in having convenient and quick access to doctors and nurses	177 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)
4	The presence of the nurses by the patients' bedside leads to the patients feeling of security and tranquillity	177 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)
5	Patients should not be waiting endlessly to consult a doctor	180 (100%)	0 (0%)
6	A doctor should be available for follow-up services on the patients	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
7	Patients should be able to have unlimited access to doctors and nurses	180 (100%)	0 (0%)
8	Patients consider the nurses' empathy and caring presence by their bedside as a primary right	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
9	Patients expect the nurses to be available for their care	180 (100%)	0 (0%)
10	Nurses' immediate response to the alarm is one main issue that can lead to the patients' peace of mind	178 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)

Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the expectation of patients on job competency from doctors and nurses?

Results as reflected in Table 1 have provided the answers to this question. All the participants (100%) agreed that doctors and nurses in our hospitals are expected to be qualified by training, and should not be quacks that will add to health challenges. Hammering on the issue of job competence, as high as 175 (97.2%) participants agreed that when a patient is consulting a competent doctor, the health challenge is half-solved. Professional competence is so important and a factor they expected to find among the doctors and nurses before being found in the hospital offices and desks attending to the sick and the injured. This is because it is only the competent healthcare provider that knows what needs to be done to keep patients safe, to reduce harm and to improve the experience of patients in the process. This finding is in line with that of Wensing, Jung, Mainz, Olesen and Grol (1998) that most desirable issues for doctors and nurses were competency. No excuses are acceptable when doctors and nurses fail in this duty, as incompetency may claim human lives. **Patients expect competent doctors and nurses as professional healthcare providers will know their jobs and meet their responsibilities to the fullest.** Patients also expected that they may consult their colleagues when their own skills or knowledge fall short along the course of care. This was why Schattner, Rudin and Jellin (2004) had earlier laid credence to the importance of competency among doctors and nurses to deserve being consulted by patients.

Research Question 2: What is the expectation of patients on behavioural characteristics from doctors and nurses?

Results in Table 2 have shown that hospital patients expected so much in terms of positive behavioural characteristics from the doctors and nurses. As shown in the Table, all the participants (100%) agreed that doctors and nurses that pay more attention to the affairs of their patients induce the feeling that they care more about their patients, and also agreed that patients desire doctors and nurses that pay attention and listen to patients. It is expected that doctors and nurses treat their patients with utmost patience and friendliness. Patients will expect nurses to take care of them, listen to them, speak with them calmly, meet their needs, reduce their pain, follow up their pain, be with them frequently, and respond to their needs immediately. This finding has been supported by that of Bendapudi, Berry and Frey (2006) and Greene (2012) that patients prefer doctors who are empathic and possess ability to provide clear explanations. It also tallies with Fakhr-Movahedi, Salsali, Negarandeh and Rahnavard (2011) that patients expect the doctors and nurses to feel responsible toward them and respect their privacy and rights. The finding of this study is also in congruence with that of Hunt (1999) who reported that patients want an experienced, intelligent, and skilful nurse who considers all their needs and helps to take care of them all the time.

Research Question 3: What is the expectation of patients on good relationship with doctors and nurses?

Results as reflected in Table 3 shows that some 178 (98.9%) participant agreed that a good doctor/nurse-patient relationship is important to build trust between them, and that doctor/nurse-patient

relationship ranked high in the list of patients' expectations. Also, all the participants (100%) that agreed that a good doctor/nurse-patient relationship can create an enabling environment for a patient to pour out his/her minds. Patients want to relate with doctors and nurses who create enabling environments for them to pour out their minds, an assurance of hope and succour. This finding is similar to the earlier submissions of Baron-Epel, Dushenat and Friedman (2001) and that of Ogden and Jain (2005) that doctor/nurse-patient relationship ranked high in the list of patients' expectations. In fact, this is an impetus for a good doctor/nurse-patient relationship. Wen (2014) also supported this finding with his earlier submission that patients place strong emphasis on a good doctor-patient relationship. Ogaji et al (2016) also supported this reporting that appropriate relationship with the patients is almost the most important expectation of the patients from the care givers.

Research Question 4: Do hospital patients in Ibadan expect doctors and nurses to educate them always regarding their health conditions and cure procedures?

As shown in Table 4, all the participants (100%) agreed that the most important expectation of patients is education from the doctors and nurses which will reduce fear, anxiety, and discomfort. All of them also agreed that patients are uncomfortable when a doctor or nurse fail to tell them the actual situation of their health challenges. This finding is in line with the earlier finding of Noohi and Pouraboli (2008) and that of Jamshidi, Abbaszadeh, Kalyani and Sharif (2013) that patients have high level of educational expectations from the doctors and nurses. Patients expect their doctors to improve their knowledge and skill regarding their health issues, as they want answers as to what happened and why. If harm has occurred, they expect an apology from those involved in the incident and other forms of reimbursement. When medication or tests are required, patients want a full and frank discussion about the specific risks and benefits. It also means ensuring that patients know they have a right to see their medical records in a timely manner. This finding tallies with that of Kalyani, Sharif, Ahmadi and Iman (2013) that patients will always expect doctors and nurses to plan, perform and assess the patient training programmes based on patients' level of education. In fact, Hunt (1999) had supported this finding in his earlier finding that the most important expectation of these patients was education which was highly

effective in reducing their fear, anxiety, and discomfort.

Research Question 5: Do hospital patients in Ibadan expect doctors and nurses to be available in hospitals always?

Results as reflected in Table 5 have shown that all the participants (100%) agreed that patients expect to find a doctor available to attend to him/her even if the patient is making unscheduled visits to the hospital, that patients should not be waiting endlessly to consult a doctor. They also all agreed that patients should be able to have unlimited access to doctors and nurses. When one desperately requires medical attention, other things become unimportant as the patient expect to enter the doctor's office immediately, unhindered and without spending any minute in the waiting lounge. It tallies with the report of Camacho, Anderson and Safrit (2006) that patients lament over the inconvenience of wasting much time at a doctor's office to consult the doctor. In Nigeria, patients have limited access to physicians as doctor/patient ratio is poor for an efficient healthcare delivery. In line with the finding in this study, Molazem, et al (2011) as well as Kalyani, Sharif, Ahmadi and Iman (2013) have reported earlier that patients expect the nurses to be available in the hospital always and to spend time for their care. Molazem et al (2011) also supported this finding, reporting that the presence of the nurses by the patients' bedside leads to the patients feeling of security and tranquillity. It is when medics are available that they can be able to respond to distress call. This is also supported by the submission of Kalyani et al. (2013) that nurses' immediate responses to call alarm is also a main issue that can lead to the patients' peace of mind. Also, spending even a short time in speaking with the patients decreases the negative consequences of lack of relationship, such as the patients' dissatisfaction, anxiety, and anger. The nurses' presence could have a positive effect on the patients, including reduction of fear and stress, confidence, and security.

Conclusion

It was found that hospital patients have diverse expectations from the doctors and nurses. **Hospital patients in Ibadan have expectations of job competency from doctors and nurses.** Patients' most important expectations fall into "competency and quality of care" **The patients also have expectations of behavioural characteristics from doctors and nurses.** Doctors and nurses need to listen, to care and be compassionate, and to be transparent and open with patients. Patients also **expect to have a good**

relationship **with** doctors and nurses. They perceive health care as the interaction with their doctor. What the patients want from their health care goes to the core of the doctor-patient relationship. The **patients also expect** doctors and nurses **to educate them** always **regarding their health conditions and cure procedures.** **Hospital patients also expect** the doctors and nurses **to be available in hospitals** always. Doctors and nurses need to be accessible and demonstrate that they have patients' best interests at heart.

Recommendations

It is important for doctors and nurses to pay attention to patients' expectations in order to provide better healthcare delivery. Hospitals should include these expectations in their care programme and management of patients. In this regard, physicians should bear in mind the importance of fulfilment of patient preferences and medical centres should adopt policies that will facilitate this approach. Since meeting the expectations of the patients from doctors and nurses is one of the basic issues in patient care, all efforts need to be put in place to ensure improved patient care. Awareness about patients' needs and expectations should be embarked upon towards meeting their expectations and thereby improving the quality of healthcare delivery in the hospitals.

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