

Assessing Patient Satisfaction in Saudi Government Hospitals: The Collaborative Role of Social Workers, Health Informatics, Pharmacy, Radiology, and Nursing Professionals in Enhancing Care Delivery

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ABSTRACT

This review examines patient satisfaction within Saudi government hospitals, focusing on the collaborative roles of social workers, health informatics specialists, pharmacists, radiologists, and nursing professionals in enhancing care delivery. Saudi Arabia's healthcare system has undergone a significant transformation, shifting from a Ministry of Health (MOH)-operated model to a privatized system. This transition aimed to improve service efficiency, quality, and sustainability, aligning with global best practices. The review highlights the critical contributions of various healthcare professionals, emphasizing the impact on patient satisfaction, quality of care, and healthcare delivery efficiency. Findings indicate high levels of satisfaction with nursing care, pharmacy services, and the use of health informatics, though challenges remain in communication and information accessibility.

KEYWORDS: Ministry of Health, patient satisfaction, nursing.

1. Introduction

Before 1399, hospitals in Saudi Arabia were managed under a "self-operating system" by the Ministry of Health (MOH), which was responsible for recruiting both Saudi and foreign staff according to the civil service guidelines. However, several factors contributed to the shift from this system to a new model that involved greater participation from the private sector in the management of public hospitals. These

factors include:

- During the National Development Plan II (1395-1400), MOH established five advanced, large-scale hospitals in Jeddah, Jizan, Hofuf, Medina, and Al Khobar. However, there was a shortage of qualified personnel to manage these facilities, prompting MOH to enter into bilateral agreements with other nations, allowing specialized staff from these countries to operate the new hospitals (Al-Husaini, 2006).
- MOH aimed to focus more on planning, organizing, overseeing, and managing operations to enhance the quality and efficiency of health services, ensuring their sustainability.
- The Saudi government sought to expand opportunities for private sector involvement in managing, operating, and maintaining projects initiated by the government, aligning with a free-market policy.
- Over nearly three decades, the private sector successfully managed some military hospitals under the Ministry of Defense and Aviation. This success continued with the operation of King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center by an international company, leading to notable advancements in healthcare quality and technology (Al-Husaini, 2006).
- MOH aspired to implement contemporary practices similar to those in North America, Europe, and East Asia, particularly in hospital management, operation, and maintenance. These global examples confirmed the private sector's ability to reduce costs and enhance service quality (Al-Husaini, 2006).

These factors prompted the Saudi government to transition from a "self-operating system" to a privatized model, utilizing private companies to operate hospitals. The shift began with partnerships between the Saudi government and other countries, gradually evolving through partial and comprehensive operating systems, ultimately leading to a fully privatized model (Ateeq, 2002).

Healthcare in Saudi Arabia has seen significant advancements over the past decade, particularly in service equity, accessibility, and progress toward universal coverage. Three decades after the introduction of the five-year development plans, the government focused on enhancing all sectors, including healthcare. These initiatives led to considerable progress in the healthcare sector (Walston et al., 2008). Today, the Ministry of Health (MOH) remains the primary provider and financier of healthcare services in the country, overseeing 244 hospitals (33,277 beds) and 2,037 primary health care (PHC) centers

Health care in Saudi Arabia has increased and improved significantly during recent decade. Especially in the areas of equity and accessibility of services, as well as the movement towards universal coverage. Thirty years later, the 5-year development plans were introduced by the government to improve all sectors of the nation, including health care system. Since then, substantial improvements in health care have been achieved in Saudi Arabia. (Walston et.al, 2008). Currently the Ministry of health (MOH) is the major government provider and financier of health care services in Saudi Arabia, with a total of 244 hospitals (33277 beds) and 2037 primary health

care (PHC) centers.

Efficiency becomes a key consideration in the healthcare sector, as the scarcity of available resources pose challenges to deliver quality patient care while optimizing resource utilization. Efficiency in the healthcare sector refers to achieving system objectives with the resources available. It encompasses two types of efficiency: technical efficiency and allocative efficiency. Technical efficiency ensures effective use of resources within healthcare facilities, while allocative efficiency involves strategic resource allocation for better population health. Integrating both leads to improved patient care and sustainable healthcare systems (Jacobs, 2001), (Azreena, 2018).

Policymakers are increasingly emphasizing the evaluation of healthcare systems and programs to ensure their efficiency and value for money (Dexter, 2007), (Hollingsworth, 2008). Measuring efficiency enables policymakers to identify areas for improvement and cost reduction, ultimately leading to better resource allocation and enhanced healthcare outcomes. However, focusing solely on efficiency is not enough. Evidence-based decision making ensures that interventions achieve desired health outcomes effectively (Gray, M. Value based healthcare. BMJ 2017), (Alatawi, 2019). By integrating efficiency and effectiveness, healthcare systems can provide top-notch care while maximizing resource allocation for optimal patient outcomes.

The review aims at evaluating Patient Satisfaction in Saudi Government Hospitals: The Collaborative Role of Social Workers, Health Informatics, Pharmacy, Radiology, and Nursing Professionals in Enhancing Care Delivery, determining the number of inputs which should be reduced (or output which should to be raised) for less efficient hospitals in order to achieve the required efficiency.

Aim of work

The primary aim of this review is to evaluate patient satisfaction in Saudi government hospitals, with a particular focus on the collaborative contributions of social workers, health informatics, pharmacy, radiology, and nursing professionals. The review seeks to identify the strengths and areas for improvement within these disciplines and assess their impact on enhancing care delivery. By understanding the factors influencing patient satisfaction, this review aims to inform strategies that can optimize healthcare delivery, resource allocation, and overall patient outcomes in Saudi government hospitals.

□ Assessing patient satisfaction

Assessing patient satisfaction in Saudi government hospitals reveals a generally high level of satisfaction across various healthcare services, though areas for improvement remain. Studies indicate that patient satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors, including the quality of nursing care, technical skills, and communication.

Patient Satisfaction Levels

- A study on nursing care satisfaction reported an average score of 71.16 out of 95, highlighting high satisfaction but also identifying areas needing improvement, such as nurse check-ins and time spent with patients (Alotaibi, 2024)

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- Systematic reviews of academic hospitals showed satisfaction rates ranging from 78% to 95.2%, with technical skills being a primary influencing factor (Alasiri et al., 2024).

Key Predictors of Satisfaction

- Research identified five main predictors of patient satisfaction: availability, accessibility, communication, technical skills, and personal qualities (Alshahrani, 2023).

- In primary healthcare centers, the overall satisfaction score was 4.2 out of 5, with care provider interactions receiving the highest ratings (Alhajri et al., 2023).

Despite the generally positive findings, discrepancies in satisfaction levels across different departments and demographics suggest a need for standardized assessment tools to better understand and address patient needs in Saudi healthcare settings.

□ Role of social workers in enhancing care delivery

The role of social workers in enhancing care delivery is multifaceted, spanning various healthcare settings and addressing diverse patient needs. Their contributions are particularly significant in long-term care, hospital environments, and during public health crises. This synthesis highlights key areas where social workers enhance care delivery.

Key Roles in Long-Term Care

- Social workers provide case management and direct support, ensuring personalized care for older adults (Acero et al., 2024).

- They engage with communities to facilitate access to resources, which is crucial for improving care quality (Acero et al., 2024).

Contributions in Hospital Settings

- In hospitals, social workers advocate for vulnerable patients, ensuring ethical treatment and transparency (Bharadwaj & Koujalgi, 2024).

- They are integral to multidisciplinary teams, enhancing patient care and rehabilitation processes (Bharadwaj & Koujalgi, 2024).

Impact in Home Care Models

- Social workers play a vital role in Hospital at Home programs, involved in safety screenings and follow-up support (Ross et al., 2021).

- Their involvement ensures smooth transitions from hospital to home, improving patient outcomes (Ross et al., 2021).

Challenges and Opportunities

- Despite their critical roles, social workers face challenges such as underutilization in certain regions, particularly in Africa (Kodom, 2022)

- (Dako-Gyeke et al., 2018). Addressing these challenges through professional development and institutional support can further enhance their impact

on healthcare delivery.

Role of Health Informatics in enhancing care delivery

Health informatics plays a pivotal role in enhancing care delivery by integrating technology and data management into healthcare practices. This integration improves patient monitoring, clinical decision-making, and overall healthcare efficiency. The following sections outline the key contributions of health informatics to care delivery.

Enhanced Patient Monitoring

- **Real-time Data Analytics:** Continuous monitoring of patient data during procedures allows for immediate feedback and adjustments, improving patient safety (Hawsawi et al., 2024).
- **Wearable Devices:** These devices track physiological parameters, facilitating early detection of complications (Hawsawi et al., 2024).

Improved Clinical Decision-Making

- **Electronic Health Records (EHR):** EHR systems ensure seamless information flow, reducing errors and enhancing coordination among healthcare teams (Hawsawi et al., 2024) (Pamnani & Kalra, 2024).
- **Clinical Decision Support Systems:** These systems provide evidence-based recommendations, aiding clinicians in making informed decisions (Pamnani & Kalra, 2024).

Streamlined Operations

- **Data-Driven Approaches:** The use of big data and analytics optimizes operational processes, leading to better health outcomes (Pamnani & Kalra, 2024).
- **Collaboration Between IT and Healthcare Professionals:** Effective integration of health information technology (HIT) enhances workflow and user experience (Baporikar, 2024).

While health informatics significantly improves care delivery, challenges such as cybersecurity threats and interoperability issues persist, necessitating ongoing efforts to address these barriers (Mankar et al., 2024) (Enahoro, 2023).

Role of Nursing professionals in enhancing care delivery

Nursing professionals play a crucial role in enhancing care delivery across various healthcare settings. Their contributions are multifaceted, encompassing patient-centered care, advocacy, and the integration of technology, which collectively improve health outcomes and patient experiences. The following sections outline the key aspects of their role in care delivery.

Patient-Centered Care

- **Nurses are pivotal in delivering personalized care by understanding patients' unique needs and developing tailored care plans. This holistic approach not only addresses physical health but also considers psychological, social, and spiritual**

aspects, leading to improved recovery outcomes (Tamshan et al., 2022).

Advocacy and Coordination

- As patient advocates, nurses navigate the healthcare system, ensuring that patients are informed and involved in decision-making. Their collaboration with interdisciplinary teams fosters seamless care coordination, enhancing the overall quality of healthcare delivery (Riffat, 2023) (Tamshan et al., 2022).

Integration of Technology

- The incorporation of technology in nursing practice allows for efficient data collection and patient monitoring. Nurses utilize digital tools to provide timely interventions, thereby optimizing patient outcomes and ensuring evidence-based care (Riffat, 2023) (Dadheech, 2022).

While the evolving role of nurses is essential for enhancing care delivery, challenges such as inadequate training in fundamental care and varying perceptions of nursing may hinder their effectiveness in some settings (“Advancing Nursing Practice through Fundamental Care Delivery,” 2022)

□ Role of radiology in enhancing care delivery

The role of radiology in enhancing care delivery is multifaceted, significantly impacting patient outcomes through advanced imaging technologies, equitable access, and integration of artificial intelligence. Radiology not only aids in accurate diagnosis and treatment but also fosters collaboration among healthcare providers, ensuring that care is both efficient and patient-centered.

Advancements in Imaging Technology

- Advanced imaging modalities such as MRI, CT, and PET have revolutionized diagnostic accuracy and treatment planning in various medical fields, particularly oncology (-, 2024).
- Innovations like digital radiology and teleradiology enhance accessibility, allowing for timely interventions and improved patient outcomes (Loginoff et al., 2023).

Promoting Health Equity

- The Radiology Support, Communication, and Alignment Network (R-SCAN) utilizes clinical decision support to reduce disparities in imaging utilization, ensuring equitable access to care for diverse populations (Wang et al., 2019).
- By addressing implicit biases and fostering collaboration, R-SCAN initiatives have successfully improved imaging appropriateness in vulnerable communities (Wang et al., 2019).

Integration of Artificial Intelligence

- AI applications in radiology are rapidly expanding, offering tools that enhance diagnostic capabilities and streamline workflows, ultimately improving clinical utility (Lobig et al., 2024).

- The systematic evaluation of AI tools can optimize resource utilization and patient outcomes, reinforcing the importance of technology in modern healthcare delivery (Lobig et al., 2024).

While the advancements in radiology significantly enhance care delivery, challenges such as the need for continuous training and adaptation to new technologies remain. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the benefits of radiology in healthcare systems.

□ Role of pharmacy in enhancing care delivery

The role of pharmacy in enhancing care delivery is increasingly recognized as vital in improving patient outcomes and healthcare efficiency. Pharmacists contribute significantly through medication management, patient education, and collaborative care models, which are essential for addressing the complexities of modern healthcare systems. This multifaceted involvement is crucial for optimizing therapeutic outcomes and ensuring patient-centered care.

Pharmacists' Contributions to Patient Care

- Medication Therapy Management (MTM): Pharmacists conduct comprehensive assessments to optimize medication regimens, reducing adverse drug events and improving adherence (Shammari et al., 2022) (Mogrin et al., 2022).
- Patient Education: They provide essential education on medication use, chronic disease management, and preventive care, enhancing patient understanding and engagement (Shammari et al., 2022) (B et al., 2023).

Integration into Healthcare Teams

- Collaborative Practice Models: Pharmacists work alongside healthcare providers to create integrated care plans, improving coordination and continuity of care (Choudhary & Siddalinggowda, 2024) (Mogrin et al., 2022).
- Community Engagement: The establishment of community centers for engagement allows pharmacists to address patients' needs holistically, fostering better patient-provider relationships (Poirier & Devraj, 2019).

While the integration of pharmacy into healthcare delivery is promising, challenges such as reimbursement issues and the need for expanded roles persist. Addressing these barriers is essential for realizing the full potential of pharmacists in enhancing care delivery.

Impact of social workers, health informatics, pharmacy, radiology and nursing in enhancing care delivery on patient satisfaction:

Assessing patient satisfaction in Saudi government hospitals involves a collaborative effort among various healthcare professionals, including social workers, health informatics specialists, pharmacists, radiologists, and nursing staff. Each group plays a vital role in enhancing care delivery, ultimately influencing patient satisfaction levels.

Impact of Nursing Professionals

- A study indicated that patient satisfaction with nursing care was high, averaging 75.96% (Alotaibi, 2024)
- Key satisfaction factors included nurses' manners, privacy, and job capability, while areas needing improvement were frequency of check-ins and time spent with patients.

Contribution of Pharmacy Services

- Research in Al-Jouf revealed that 86% of patients felt their health-related queries were adequately addressed by pharmacy services (Alatawi et al., 2023)
- However, gaps were noted in providing information on medication storage and patient health conditions, indicating areas for enhancement.

Impact of Health Informatics

- The integration of electronic health records (EHRs) has been positively perceived by healthcare professionals, improving communication and service delivery (Alharbi & Aljuaid, 2024)
- Enhanced data management can lead to better patient experiences and satisfaction.

Importance of Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- Effective collaboration among healthcare professionals is essential for addressing patient needs comprehensively, as evidenced by the overall satisfaction scores across various services (Alhajri et al., 2023)

While the collaborative roles of these professionals significantly enhance patient satisfaction, challenges remain, such as communication gaps and service accessibility, which require ongoing attention and improvement efforts.

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, patient satisfaction in Saudi government hospitals is generally positive, but there is room for improvement. This review underscores the importance of a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to enhancing patient satisfaction in Saudi government hospitals. Nursing professionals, pharmacists, health informatics specialists, social workers, and radiologists play pivotal roles in delivering comprehensive and effective healthcare services. The integration of advanced technologies, such as electronic health records, has positively impacted service delivery, while the contributions of pharmacists and social workers have been essential in-patient education and support. Despite the positive results in several areas, there are still gaps in communication and service accessibility that need to be addressed. Continuous improvement efforts are crucial for maintaining high standards of care, ensuring patient satisfaction, and achieving sustainable healthcare outcomes in line with the country's evolving healthcare landscape.

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