The spotlight has never shone brighter on how well you treat your patients. The public, potential patients, and payers can now look online to see how well you fared on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS). Your reputation, as well as your bottom line, could be in jeopardy if your patients give you low ratings.

This handy pocket-sized guide will train staff members to:
- Give patients clear expectations
- Ask patients what is important to them
- Spend adequate time with patients during shifts
- Practice hourly nurse rounding
- Use service recovery
- Ease the anxiety of family members

HCAHPS Success: Ten Strategies to Improve Performance is an effective and easy-to-use training tool and reference guide for caregivers on all levels.

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About the Author

Lisa Buckley is a senior managing editor at HCPro and writes about HCAHPS extensively for the newsletter Quality Improvement Report.
The public spotlight shines on your hospital

How satisfied are your patients with the way they are treated in the hospital? Do you respond in a timely manner to their concerns and complaints? Pay attention to their personal needs and concerns? Work as a team to deliver the best possible care?

The spotlight has never shone brighter on how well you treat, or mistreat, your patients. The public, potential patients, and payers can now look online to see how well you fared on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS). Your reputation, as well as your bottom line, could be in jeopardy if your patients give you low ratings.
Questions correlated with high scores

A survey released by Press Ganey in March found that the following five aspects of care (all proprietary Press Ganey questions) had the greatest effect on overall HCAHPS scores.

- Response to concerns and complaints
- Degree to which staff members addressed patients’ emotional needs
- Staff members efforts to include patients in decisions about their treatment
- How well the nurses kept patients informed
- Promptness in responding to the call light
The study, *Hospital Pulse Report: Patient Perspectives on American Health Care*, also found five areas from the Press Ganey survey items that were most closely correlated with high overall scores on the HCAHPS measures. They include:

- Collaboration among staff members to work as a team in caring for patients
- A timely response to concerns and complaints
- Up-to-date information provided to patients from nurses
- A concerted effort by staff members to include patients in treatment decisions
- Careful attention by staff members to patients’ special/personal needs

Copyright 2008: Press Ganey

Now let’s look at ten strategies your staff can use with patients to keep them satisfied – and prevent your HCAHPS performance from plummeting.

1. Give your patients clear explanations of what will happen during their stay.

2. Ask patients for the top two or three things they want during their hospital stay and write it down on the whiteboard.
HCAHPS Success: Ten Strategies to Improve Performance

3. Spend three to five minutes with patients at the beginning of every shift

4. Practice hourly nurse rounding

5. Make sure your patients know their rooms have been cleaned by leaving tent cards

6. Instruct all staff members to ask patients whether they have any questions at the end of every encounter

7. Use patient comments—good and bad—to educate staff members

8. Empower staff members to use service recovery

9. Ease the anxiety of family members

10. Make follow-up calls to all patients after discharge
Give patients clear explanations of what will happen during their stay—and when they leave

Remember, your patient is most likely suffering from anxiety and perhaps even fear. As a clinician who comes to work every day in the hospital, you know all about routine tests, medication side effects, and postoperative pain. Your patients don’t.

For example, if someone has to undergo an MRI, staff members should explain in precise detail how long the test will last, how noisy it will be, and how claustrophobic it will feel.

It’s also critical to educate patients about any new medications they will be taking in the hospital and their side effects. That education drives the scores of the medication communication domain, which often gets low ratings.

Also important? Telling patients what to do and what they can expect when they are discharged. The excellent care you provided in the hospital may not be remembered by your patients if they’re confused, anxious, and unprepared when they arrive home.
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