

*Is our quality of care being measured unconsciously?*

# SATISFACTION

# Patient



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*Information that is intended to enhance accountability in health care by  
increasing transparency of the quality of hospital care provided.*

## PERSPECTIVE OF CARE

HOSPITAL EXPERIENCE  
MEANINGFUL COMPARISONS

## IMPLICIT BIAS



# PATIENT SATISFACTION

“Patient satisfaction scores are inherently subjective. They are based on individual patients' unique expectations, which can be influenced by personal biases, prior experiences, cultural backgrounds, and information gathered from sources like online reviews or friends.”

## IMPLICIT BIAS

“Individuals’ perceptions and behaviors can be influenced by the implicit biases they hold, even if they are unaware they hold such biases.”

*“Implicit bias can impact patient experiences, potentially leading to lower patient satisfaction scores which, in turn, can affect hospital quality scores.”*

### Defining "Satisfaction"

In a general sense, satisfaction is the feeling of contentment or gratification that results from having fulfilled a desire, need, or expectation. It is a positive emotional response, essentially meaning you are pleased with the way something turned out or with a particular experience.

### Patient Satisfaction

Specifically in healthcare, patient satisfaction is a measure of how happy a patient is with their healthcare experience.

In essence, if a *patient's expectations* of care are met or exceeded, they are likely to report a higher level of satisfaction.

### What Patient Satisfaction is Not

Patient satisfaction is not the same as clinical quality. While a positive patient experience can correlate with better outcomes, satisfaction doesn't always reflect the technical excellence of a procedure or treatment. For example, a surgery may be technically successful, yet the patient might be dissatisfied due to feeling rushed, ignored, or experiencing poor pain management.

Patient satisfaction is distinct from patient experience. Patient experience encompasses the sum of all interactions a patient has with the healthcare system – the *objective* events, processes, and communication. Patient satisfaction, on the other hand, is the *patient's subjective* rating or feeling about that experience, based on their personal expectations and perceptions. A patient may have a positive experience (timely care, clear communication), but still report lower satisfaction if their expectations were unmet (e.g., expecting a faster recovery than realistic).

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### Limitations of Patient Satisfaction Scores

Subjectivity and Expectations:

Patient satisfaction scores are inherently subjective. They are based on individual patients' unique expectations, which can be influenced by personal biases, prior experiences, cultural backgrounds, and information gathered from sources like online reviews or friends. This makes them potentially inconsistent and challenging to use as objective measures of care quality.

### Potential for Bias

Patients may be hesitant to voice negative feedback directly to providers or in fear of impacting their care, leading to skewed results in satisfaction surveys.

Additionally, selection bias can occur with voluntary surveys, where only patients with extremely positive or negative experiences might choose to respond.

*Limited Scope: Surveys often rely on a fixed set of questions, which might not fully capture all aspects of a patient's experience that contribute to their satisfaction. Important factors not included in a survey might be overlooked or underestimated.*

### Inconsistent Administration

The method and timing of survey administration can influence results. Surveys administered immediately after discharge might yield different results than those collected weeks or months later.



*Implicit bias, also known as implicit prejudice or implicit attitude, is a negative attitude, of which one is not consciously aware, against a specific social group.*

*Implicit bias is thought to be shaped by experience and based on learned associations between particular qualities and social categories, including race and/or gender. Individuals' perceptions and behaviors can be influenced by the implicit biases they hold, even if they are unaware they hold such biases. Implicit bias is an aspect of implicit social cognition: the phenomenon that perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes can operate prior to conscious intention or endorsement.*

*Adapted from the APA Dictionary of Psychology*

### **Focus on Satisfaction vs. Quality Improvement**

A focus solely on satisfaction scores can potentially distract from directly addressing other crucial quality metrics, or even lead to compromises in clinical care if providers feel pressured to appease patients to achieve high scores. For example, studies have raised concerns about overprescribing medications to satisfy patients' pain management expectations.

### **Disconnect Between Feedback and Outcomes**

Even when satisfaction scores are high, it doesn't automatically mean that concrete improvements in care processes will follow if the feedback is not analyzed and acted upon effectively.

Understanding the definition of satisfaction in healthcare and recognizing its limitations are crucial for nurses and other healthcare professionals. While valuable, patient satisfaction scores should be interpreted with a critical eye, considering the subjective nature of patient perceptions and supplementing them with other objective measures of patient experience and clinical quality to achieve a comprehensive view of healthcare delivery.

[Hospital Experience Survey](#)



**SCAN ME!**

*What can we do to improve the patient's experience?*

*Focus on the things we can change... our own unconscious bias and attitudes toward others.*

### **Mindfulness and Cognitive Strategies**

Practice mindfulness:

- Engage in mindfulness exercises to become more attuned to your thoughts and feelings, including those related to potential biases

Challenge assumptions:

- Learn to question your initial assumptions about patients, especially those from groups that are often stereotyped

Individuate patients:

- Focus on the patient as an individual with unique needs and circumstances rather than relying on group-based stereotypes

*Outsmarting Implicit Bias*

*Are you making the best decisions at work?*