

Patient Satisfaction as an Indicator of Quality Care in a Student-Run Free Clinic

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Abstract

Background: Little is known about patient experiences at student-run free clinics (SRFC) in the U.S. The objectives of this study were to evaluate patient satisfaction at a SRFC and to compare these findings with a non-student-run free clinic. **Methods:** Eighty-seven of 96 patients seen at an interprofessional student-run free clinic associated with a private university in Cleveland, OH from April 2011 to January 2012 completed a patient satisfaction questionnaire. A random sample of 40 patient satisfaction questionnaires was obtained from the non-student-run weekly free clinic out of which the SRFC operates during the study period. Comparisons were made using a Mann-Whitney U test. **Results:** Patients indicated high levels of satisfaction in the domains of accessibility, provider care, student care, overall case management, facility quality, and patient confidentiality. Lower levels of satisfaction were reported with regard to waiting time. Comparison of patient satisfaction between patients at the SRFC and the non-student-run weekly free clinic revealed similar satisfaction scores for the majority of questions. Patients seen by the non-SRFC scored higher satisfaction in the domains of clinic accessibility, privacy, and likelihood to refer others to the clinic. **Conclusions:** Patients seen at a SRFC are satisfied with overall care. Satisfaction surveys allow students to identify areas for targeted improvement projects and to assess the degree to which they are meeting the needs and expectations of their patients.

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