

QUALITY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ON THE EXAMPLE OF HEALTH CARE COMPLEX IN ŚWIĘTOCHŁOWICE SP. Z O.O.

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Introduction/background: This article is based on a bachelor's thesis carried out by Karolina Mainka under the scientific supervision of the author (Administration part-time 1st degree: “Quality of customer service in public administration based on the example of Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Świętochłowicach Sp. z o.o. – Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice Sp. z o.o.”). In the past years, there has been a noticeable increase in the importance of the term "quality" in various fields, as well as in the awareness of people in terms of a quality, which results in higher expectations regarding products and services. The notion of quality has accompanied us since ancient times. In everyday life, each person is surrounded by a large amount of products, such as cellphones, computers, clothes and others. Everyone also uses various services, such as hairdressing services, services provided by government offices or medical services. Each type of those services is related to the customer service provided to a greater or lesser degree of quality. The quality of products is somehow measurable, whereas the quality of service is hard to clearly define or measure. Therefore, we can only rely on positive or negative opinions of the customers.

Aim of the paper: The aim of the paper is to analyse the quality of patient service in chosen district hospital on the basis of four chapters – two of theoretical nature and two practical ones dedicated to methodology of own research and interpretation of obtained results.

Materials and methods: Literature analysis, analysis of source materials (internal), survey method - technique: indirect survey, tool: survey questionnaire.

Results and conclusions: Considerations presented in the paper show the importance of the customer service quality. The main task of the hospitals is to provide a high quality service in the field of a health care. The basis for the improvement of health services is the results of the evaluation of the quality of services provided by the hospital. One of the elements of assessing the quality of healthcare is patient satisfaction. An important factor which influences the success of a health care facility management is the level of patient satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction studies give the facility the opportunity to evaluate patients' opinions on offered services, and consecutively – bring the prospects of defining the weaknesses in the hospital covered by the study. Regular evaluation of customer satisfaction translates into an increase in the quality of provided medical services. An increase of the standards impacts the mental well-being of the patients. Understanding patients' expectations and meeting their requirements reflects in the quality of provided services.

Patient satisfaction with provided services has a strong influence on repeat use of the health facility, as well as on recommending it to another person. Interest and care provided by the personnel influences mental condition of the patients. Good mental condition during a hospital

stay results in faster recuperation. In evaluation of the hospital, each element is important. The quality does not only consist of the attitude of the staff, but also of the entire environment of the hospital, including adaptation of the building, proper signage, and maintenance of cleanliness. All these components form one whole, which is perceived and evaluated by the patient.

Keywords: quality, management in the health care, custom service.

1. Introduction

In the past years, there has been a noticeable increase in the importance of the term "quality" in various fields, as well as in the awareness of people in terms of a quality, which results in higher expectations regarding products and services. The notion of quality has accompanied us since ancient times. In everyday life, each person is surrounded by a large amount of products, such as cellphones, computers, clothes and others. Everyone also uses various services, such as hairdressing services, services provided by government offices or medical services. Each type of those services is related to the customer service provided to a greater or lesser degree of quality. The quality of products is somehow measurable, whereas the quality of service is hard to clearly define or measure. Therefore, we can only rely on positive or negative opinions of the customers.

The aim of the paper is to analyse the quality of patient service in a hospital. The paper consists of four chapters. First two chapters are theoretical. The third chapter is the methodology of own research. The final chapter is an interpretation of the results of own research.

In the first chapter, the notion of "quality" has been explained. The measurement of the quality of tangible things and their characteristics have been described, as well as the measurement of service quality. Moreover, the terms of "client" and "service" have been defined.

In the second chapter, the notion of "quality in health care" has been described. In a way, the patient is a customer using a medical service, which should be provided on the highest level. The hospital architecture, its impact on the quality and patient experience is then described. The attitude toward the patients and competence of medical personnel, including the nurses, have been discussed. Firstly, it was the nurses that have been evaluated, because patients come into contact with them first. This was followed by the topic of communication and the doctor-patient relationship. It has a big impact on the patient's well-being. There is also a reference to the patient's rights, compliance with which is important for the patients and has an influence on the perception of medical services, as well as the sense of safety.

The third chapter is the methodology of own research, in which the subject and the purpose of the study have been defined. The research problems and hypotheses are then presented, followed by a description of the research methods, techniques and tools.

The fourth and last chapter presents a detailed analysis of the research results. It formulates conclusions from the conducted research and reflects on the analysed solutions that could contribute to the improvement of the examined situation in Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Świętochłowicach Sp. z o.o.

The final part of the paper consists of the most important conclusions and observations.

Discussed paper has been written in accordance with the current state of the law as of 30 September 2020.

The substantive preparation for the study was based on the literature on the subject, legal acts and source documents from the website of the studied facility.

2. Characteristics of the studied facility

Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Świętochłowicach Sp. z o. o. is an independent municipal organisational unit with legal personality. The founding body of the Company is the Municipal Council in Świętochłowice. The Company's seat and area of operation is the city of Świętochłowice. The Independent Public Health Care Unit was transformed into a capital company under the name: Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Świętochłowicach Spółka z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością (Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice LTD.) by the act of transformation of 4 June 2012.

The Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice functions on the basis of:

- Act of 15 April 2011 on medical activity,
- the applicable Articles of institution,
- other provisions concerning independent public health care institutions and municipal organisational units,
- of the Act of 23 April 1964 – Civil Code.

Based on the Resolution of the City Council of 25th June 1997, the Health Care Complex became an Independent Public Health Care Institution. In order to secure the health needs of the city's residents, the Świętochłowice Municipality concluded a contract with the Independent Public Health Care Institution for the provision of comprehensive health care services. The establishment provides health services that serve to preserve, save, restore and improve health, as well as other medical activities resulting from the treatment process or separate provisions that regulate the principles of their performance and health promotion.

According to the Statutes of the entity characterised, the hospital provides health services in the field of:

- primary health care,
- outpatient specialised healthcare,
- inpatient specialised healthcare,

- a care and treatment facility,
- occupational medicine,
- sports medicine,
- diagnostic tests,
- outpatient emergency care,
- disease prevention and health promotion,
- long-term home care team – long-term nursing care,
- management of blood and blood products for the Hospital,
- services provided by the N. neonatology outreach team.

Currently, the following hospital wards operate in Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Świętochłowicach Sp. z o.o.:

- Neurology Ward,
- Neonatology Ward,
- Paediatric Ward,
- Otolaryngology Ward,
- Rehabilitation Ward,
- Anaesthesiology Ward,
- Psychiatric Ward,
- Internal Medicine Ward,
- General and Short-Term Surgery Ward,
- Gynaecology and Obstetrics Ward,
- Alcohol Addiction Treatment Ward.

Health services are provided under a contract signed by the National Health Fund or under commercial services according to the price list established by Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Świętochłowicach Sp. z o.o.

3. Methodology of the study

The subject of the study was to find out the satisfaction of patients in this hospital with particular reference to the nursing and medical care, the use of facilities for people with disabilities, the hospital admission and discharge process, and the overall stay in the facility.

In the study, the following main research problem has been posed: "Are patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice satisfied with the quality of provided services?", whereas specific problems are:

1. Is there a car park around the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice?
2. Is the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice adapted to the needs of people with disabilities?
3. Is the organisational structure of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice understandable for the patients?
4. Are the patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice satisfied with cleanliness of the rooms in the hospital?
5. Are the patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice satisfied with hospital's catering services?
6. Are the patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice satisfied with the hospital staff?
7. Did the patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice receive instructions on the course of further treatment at discharge?
8. Did the personnel respect the patient's rights while their stay at the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice?

In order to perform the research correctly, the following hypotheses have been made:

Main hypothesis: The patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice are satisfied with the quality of provided services. Following auxiliary hypothesis were also adopted:

Hypothesis 1: The Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice has a clearly marked and accessible parking area.

Hypothesis 2: The Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice is adapted to the needs of people with disabilities.

Hypothesis 3: Organisational structure of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice is understandable to the patients.

Hypothesis 4: In the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice the cleanliness is provided on a high level.

Hypothesis 5: In the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice the catering services are provided on a high level.

Hypothesis 6: The patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice are satisfied with its staff.

Hypothesis 7: The patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice received instructions on the course of further treatment at discharge.

Hypothesis 8: The personnel of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice respects patient's rights.

The research has been conducted with the use of an authorial survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 60 closed-end questions with the Likert scale. The survey has been divided into eight parts. The first part concerned an open-access parking space (questions from 3 to 7), the second part concerned facilities for people with disabilities (questions from 8 to 17), the fourth part verified hospital admission process (questions from 18 to 21), the fifth

part concerned meals and diet (questions from 31 to 39), the sixth part verified politeness and interest in the patient, as well as general work of the medical personnel (questions from 40 to 51), the seventh part addressed the issue related to hospital discharge (questions from 52 to 53), and the last part concerned overall well-being during the hospital stay (questions from 54 to 60).

4. Course of the study

The main source of obtaining data on patient service quality was Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Świętochłowicach Sp. z o.o. Prior to the study, the CEO of the Hospital was asked for approval to carry out the research. After obtaining the permission, the research was launched.

The study was conducted in April and May 2020, at the "Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Świętochłowicach Sp. z o.o." Survey questionnaires were distributed by nurses. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary and anonymous.

50 patients took part in the study, including 27 women and 23 men. An average length of the respondents' hospital stay was as follows: less than 3 days – 3 people, between 3 and 6 days – 25 people, between 7 and 11 days – 7 people, 12 days and more – 15 people.

5. Verification of the research hypothesis

The aim of conducted research was to analyse the quality of patient service on the example of Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Świętochłowicach Sp. z o. o. Primarily, the research was based on obtaining necessary data sourced from the patients staying at the aforementioned facility. The research was of a diagnostic nature.

Conducting of the study allowed to verify the hypotheses.

The percentage distribution of responses to the first auxiliary hypothesis is included in Table 1.

Table 1.

Distribution of answers to questions about the first auxiliary hypothesis

Number of question	Distribution of answers [%]				
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	I don't know	Rather no	Definitely no
3	Does the hospital have a parking?				
	56%	26%	18%	0%	0%
4	Is the parking free?				
	58%	14%	28%	0%	0%

Cont. table 1.

5	Is the parking correctly marked?				
	0%	14%	20%	0%	66%
6	Does the parking have a sufficient space?				
	0%	0%	26%	12%	62%
7	Are the parking spaces clearly marked?				
	0%	0%	32%	6%	62%

Source: own work.

Specific hypothesis 1, which reads: "The Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice has a clearly marked and accessible parking area" has been partly proven. Summing up the above results, it can be noticed that certain problems arise from the very arrival at the hospital. Small number of parking spaces or their poor designation results in decreased satisfaction of the patients.

The percentage distribution of responses to the second auxiliary hypothesis is included in Table 2.

Table 2.

Distribution of answers to questions about the second auxiliary hypothesis

Number of question	Distribution of answers [%]				
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	I don't know	Rather no	Definitely no
8	Is there a wheelchair ramp at the hospital?				
	70%	22%	8%	0%	0%
9	Are the doors opened automatically?				
	0%	0%	26%	16%	58%
10	Are there on-call wheelchairs available?				
	0%	42%	34%	12%	12%
11	Is there a lift at the hospital?				
	74%	12%	14%	0%	0%
12	Are the toilets adapted for the needs of people with disabilities?				
	50%	26%	24%	0%	0%
13	Is the hospital layout simple and functional for a blind person?				
	62%	10%	28%	0%	0%
14	Is there a uniform colour, pictogram, digital or lettering information?				
	0%	38%	30%	22%	10%
15	Do the passageways contain obstacles to mobility?				
	0%	48%	20%	32%	0%
16	Is an audible signalling used?				
	0%	0%	20%	14%	66%
17	Is there a sign language interpreter at the hospital?				
	0%	0%	72%	10%	18%

Source: own work.

Auxiliary hypothesis 2: "The Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice is adapted to the needs of people with disabilities" has also been partly proven. The respondents have unequivocally indicated that a major problem is doors that do not open automatically as well as obstacles in the passageways. According to the respondents, a big advantage are the toilets adjusted to the needs of people with disabilities as well as a simple layout of the hospital.

The percentage distribution of responses to the third auxiliary hypothesis is included in Table 3.

Table 3.*Distribution of answers to questions about the third auxiliary hypothesis*

Number of question	Distribution of answers [%]				
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	I don't know	Rather no	Definitely no
18	Was the waiting time at the emergency room short?				
	32%	44%	24%	0%	0%
19	Have you been informed about the hospital's statute?				
	70%	18%	0%	12%	0%
20	Were you given any diagnostic tests during your admission to the emergency room?				
	42%	14%	4%	10%	30%
21	Have you been informed of all admission and residence procedures?				
	48%	22%	30%	0%	0%

Source: own work.

Another auxiliary hypothesis assuming that "Organisational structure of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice is understandable to the patients" has been proven. The respondents were satisfied with short waiting time at the emergency room. They were also pleased with information given by the personnel.

The percentage distribution of responses to the fourth auxiliary hypothesis is included in Table 4.

Table 4.*Distribution of answers to questions about the fourth auxiliary hypothesis*

Number of question	Distribution of answers [%]				
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	I don't know	Rather no	Definitely no
22	Have you been informed about the layout of specific rooms in the ward (toilets, doctor's room, nurses' room etc.)?				
	42%	24%	6%	28%	0%
23	Have you been informed about the visiting hours?				
	50%	36%	10%	4%	0%
24	Were the rooms clean?				
	46%	46%	8%	0%	0%
25	Were the rooms air-conditioned?				
	0%	0%	8%	8%	84%
26	Were the rooms aired properly?				
	32%	24%	6%	18%	20%
27	Was the room equipment satisfying?				
	28%	28%	6%	24%	14%
28	Was the bedding clean?				
	64%	34%	2%	0%	0%
29	Is there a room in the ward designated for visitors?				
	0%	0%	24%	8%	68%
30	Were the toilets and showers clean?				
	32%	48%	20%	0%	0%

Source: own work.

Another fourth auxiliary hypothesis assuming that "in the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice, the cleanliness is provided on a high level" has also been proven. The cleanliness of the hospital was perceived positively. Most of the respondents claims that the personnel takes good care of the rooms and airs them regularly.

The percentage distribution of responses to the fifth auxiliary hypothesis is included in Table 5.

Table 5.*Distribution of answers to questions about the fifth auxiliary hypothesis*

Number of question	Distribution of answers [%]				
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	I don't know	Rather no	Definitely no
31	Were the meals provided in the hospital?				
	88%	8%	4%	0%	0%
32	Was the quality of meals satisfying?				
	42%	38%	6%	14%	0%
33	Was the temperature of meals adequate?				
	28%	36%	12%	24%	0%
34	Were the meals distributed regularly?				
	58%	36%	6%	0%	0%
35	Is there a social room in the ward?				
	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
36	Is there a fridge in the social room?				
	24%	12%	64%	0%	0%
37	Is there a kettle in the social room?				
	30%	6%	64%	0%	0%
38	Is there a kiosk at the hospital?				
	62%	20%	18%	0%	0%
39	Are there vending machines with coffee, tea, water etc. at the hospital?				
	60%	14%	26%	0%	0%

Source: own work.

The fifth auxiliary hypothesis ("In the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice, the catering services are provided on a high level") has been proven. The quality of meals in the hospital received high scores. The meals were distributed regularly. The respondents had also an access to the kiosk and vending machines.

The percentage distribution of responses to the sixth auxiliary hypothesis is included in Table 6.

Table 6.*Distribution of answers to questions about the sixth auxiliary hypothesis*

Number of question	Distribution of answers [%]				
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	I don't know	Rather no	Definitely no
40	Has the hospital ensured your right to dignity and intimacy?				
	38%	50%	12%	0%	0%
41	Were the doctors polite and showed interest?				
	44%	42%	4%	10%	0%
42	Were the nurses polite and showed interest?				
	58%	34%	8%	0%	0%
43	Has the attending doctor kept you informed about the course of the disease?				
	34%	20%	6%	20%	20%
44	Have the nurses kept you informed about the course of the disease?				
	26%	22%	6%	34%	12%
45	Do the nurses come in when asked for?				
	58%	34%	8%	0%	0%
46	Was the attending doctor experienced?				
	44%	20%	26%	10%	0%
47	Were the nurses experienced?				
	52%	16%	32%	0%	0%
48	Did the medical staff provide information on how and what kind of treatments were planned?				
	38%	22%	10%	30%	0%

Cont. table 6.

49	Was the doctor available during the day?				
	36%	24%	6%	34%	0%
50	Was the doctor available in the evening and at night?				
	32%	20%	8%	24%	16%
51	Did the nurse assist with nursing activities?				
	50%	28%	6%	16%	0%

Source: own work.

Another auxiliary hypothesis assuming that "The patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice are satisfied with its staff" has been partly proven. The patients positively evaluated behaviour of the staff. Most of them expressed satisfaction with their right to dignity being respected, as well as with politeness and help of the nurses. In terms of information on the course of the disease, the results have not been so satisfying. The patients were very pleased with the amount of experience of doctors and nurses.

The percentage distribution of responses to the seventh auxiliary hypothesis is included in Table 7.

Table 7.

Distribution of answers to questions about the seventh auxiliary hypothesis

Number of question	Distribution of answers [%]				
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	I don't know	Rather no	Definitely no
52	Was the waiting time for discharge long?				
	0%	0%	44%	30%	26%
53	Did you receive guidance on how to proceed after leaving hospital?				
	68%	22%	10%	0%	0%

Source: own work.

Specific hypothesis 7 reading: "The patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice received instructions on the course of further treatment at discharge" has been proven. In terms of guidance on how to proceed after leaving the hospital, almost all of the respondents expressed satisfaction.

The percentage distribution of responses to the eighth auxiliary hypothesis is included in Table 8.

Table 8.

Distribution of answers to questions about the eighth auxiliary hypothesis

Number of question	Distribution of answers [%]				
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	I don't know	Rather no	Definitely no
54	Were the diagnoses accurate?				
	62%	26%	12%	0%	0%
55	Were the treatment methods accurate?				
	28%	32%	40%	0%	0%
56	Were the patient's rights respected?				
	30%	30%	40%	0%	0%
57	Did you feel safe during the stay at the hospital?				
	40%	36%	24%	0%	0%
58	Were the visiting hours appropriate?				
	50%	32%	0%	18%	0%

Cont. table 8.

59	Was the family allowed to participate in the nursing activities?				
	34%	36%	0%	30%	0%
60	Would you recommend the hospital to your family, friends?				
	30%	22%	24%	8%	16%

Source: own work.

Last eighth auxiliary hypothesis assuming that "The personnel of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice respects patient's rights" has also been proven. The patients felt safe, diagnoses were correct, and the patient's rights were respected.

The research conducted in the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice concerned the quality of the customer service. Considering the distribution of responses to the auxiliary hypotheses discussed in detail, as well as their verification, the validity of the main hypothesis can therefore be confirmed: "The patients of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice are satisfied with the quality of provided services" Overall quality of the hospital care has been evaluated on a high level. Most of the respondents were satisfied with the service, experience of doctors and nurses, and the quality of food, as well as with an overall stay at the hospital. Also, a larger part of the respondents felt safe at the ward, which has a great impact on the treatment process, as patients who feel well cared for and safe recover more quickly.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The subject of this paper was the quality of customer service in public administration on the example of the Health Care Complex in Świętochłowice. The research was conducted among the patients of the hospital. The aim of the study was to analyse the quality of patient service in the hospital.

Considerations presented in the paper show the importance of the customer service quality. The main task of the hospitals is to provide a high quality service in the field of a health care. The basis for the improvement of health services is the results of the evaluation of the quality of services provided by the hospital. One of the elements of assessing the quality of healthcare is patient satisfaction. An important factor which influences the success of a health care facility management is the level of patient satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction studies give the facility the opportunity to evaluate patients' opinions on offered services, and consecutively - bring the prospects of defining the weaknesses in the hospital covered by the study. Regular evaluation of customer satisfaction translates into an increase in the quality of provided medical services. An increase of the standards impacts the mental well-being of the patients. Understanding patients' expectations and meeting their requirements reflects in the quality of provided services.

Patient satisfaction with provided services has a strong influence on repeat use of the health facility, as well as on recommending it to another person. Interest and care provided by the personnel influences mental condition of the patients. Good mental condition during a hospital stay results in faster recuperation. In evaluation of the hospital, each element is important. The quality does not only consists of the attitude of the staff, but also of the entire environment of the hospital, including adaptation of the building, proper signage, and maintenance of cleanliness. All these components form one whole, which is perceived and evaluated by the patient.

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