## Introduction

Measurement of patient satisfaction is an important consideration in any medical setting as it allows providers to tailor their practice to patient needs. An extensively utilized, nationally administered, standardized patient satisfaction survey is the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS). The HCAHPS was developed by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. It consists of 27 questions that evaluate patient satisfaction with diverse aspects of care such as communication with nurses, communication with doctors, responsiveness of hospital staff, pain management, communication about medicines, and discharge information.

The primary goal of analyzing patient satisfaction via surveys such as the HCAHPS is to assess the provision of efficient and effective care. However, the relationship between patient satisfaction and the quality of care provided is poorly understood and ill defined.

## Clinical Question

Does improvement in patient satisfaction with their health care and its providers, as measured by the HCAHPS survey, improve health care quality and outcomes?

## Methods

### Inclusion Criteria
- Utilized the HCAHPS survey
- Highly tested quality assessment tool(s)
- USA based study involving nationwide survey of hospitals
- Studies performed during or after 2008
- Reputable journal

### Exclusion Criteria
- Il defined or non-tested quality assessment tool
- Utilized another patient satisfaction survey
- Study not involving nationwide hospitals
- Studies performed before 2008
- Non-reputable journal

### Study 1: Patients’ Perception of Hospital Care in the United States (Jha et al., 2008)

**Objective:** To determine if hospital HCAHPS survey performance relates to performance indicators of clinical care quality.

**Results:** After adjusting for other hospital characteristics, there was a significant relationship found between the highest quartile HCAHPS scores and high HQA scores across all four conditions

**Critique:** Hospitals that did not submit HCAHPS scores could have a significant impact regarding the relationship between patient satisfaction and health care quality

### Study 2: Patient Satisfaction and Quality of Surgical Care in US Hospitals (Tsai et al., 2015)

**Objective:** To determine the relationship between surgical quality and efficiency with patient satisfaction.

**Results:** Higher patient satisfaction was associated with shorter length of stay, higher SCIP process scores, lower mortality and lower readmission rates.

**Critique:** The use of administrative data may not adequately account for data that does not fall under specific billing codes.


**Objective:** To define the relationship between patient satisfaction and health care utilization, expenditures, and outcomes.

**Results:** Respondents in the highest patient satisfaction quartile had significantly higher odds of any inpatient admission, total greater expenditures, and 26% higher mortality.

**Critique:** The study is limited in that patient satisfaction with the physician is the only domain of health care satisfaction addressed.

### Study 4: Is There a Relationship Between Patient Satisfaction and Favorable Outcomes? (Kennedy et al, 2014)

**Objective:** To evaluate whether high patient satisfaction measured by HCAHPS surveys correlates with favorable outcomes.

**Results:** SCIP process measures and patient safety indicators, as well as length of stay, did not correlate with overall satisfaction indicating that patient satisfaction is not a gauge of patient safety and care effectiveness.

**Critique:** Application of this study is limited due to the fact that all hospitals included were academic medical centers.

### Study 5: Patient Satisfaction as a Possible Indicator of Quality Surgical Care (Lyu et al, 2013)

**Objective:** To determine whether patient satisfaction is independent from surgical process measures and hospital safety.

**Results:** Patient satisfaction was independent of surgical process scores and hospital mortality.

**Critique:** The small hospital sample size and that survey data was only collected from urban hospitals may limit the applicability to a larger population.

## Conclusion

Though the HCAHPS is the most widely utilized and researched patient care survey in the United States, its efficacy as an assessment of healthcare quality is still contentious. It has been demonstrated in this review that large, nationally representative studies have competing results on this topic. Given the importance attributed to high HCAHPS scores by The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, understanding the exact implications of high patient satisfaction scores is becoming increasingly critical. However, current studies have numerous limitations which make it impossible to provide a definite answer the question at hand. In order to determine a causal relationship between improvement in patient satisfaction and improvement in healthcare quality and outcomes, further research correcting for current limitations in measurement tools is needed.

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## References