

Original article:

Impact of Implementation of NABH Standards on Patient Experience and Feedback about Hospital Services

Manpreet Singh Nanda¹, Kuldeep Sharma¹, Minakshi¹,

Abstract

Background: Health care is one of the most important service industry where quality standards need to be maintained for patient treatment and satisfaction. National accreditation boards for hospitals and health care providers (NABH) standards focus on quality, infection control and patient safety. The impact of these standards on patient feedback about hospital services needs to be studied. **Objective:** To observe the impact of NABH standards on patient feedback and experiences and patient satisfaction. **Methods:** Patient feedback and experience data collected by Quality department of the hospital for the months of October 2018 (before implementation of NABH standards) was compared with data of October 2023 (5 years of implementation of NABH standards) and the data was analysed using statistical tools. The data was analysed and compared separately for Outpatient department (OPD) and In Patient department (IPD) patients. **Results:** The data was collected through questionnaire from 400 patients and their relatives (for less than 18 years age patients) each for both months. There was improvement in feedback and experiences for all elements of the questionnaire for both OPD and IPD patients, more significantly for staff behaviour and communication skills of staff. The feedback and experiences for IPD patients were more satisfactory than OPD patients in our study. **Conclusion:** NABH standards implementation has a positive impact on patient feedback and experiences leading to greater patient satisfaction. IPD patients are more satisfied with hospital services as compared to OPD patients.

Keywords: Communication skills, patient feedback, IPD, NABH, OPD, Quality, QCI

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Introduction

Health care industry is one of the most important service industry.¹ It is important to maintain good service standards in a hospital as good service quality leads to better patient care and greater patient satisfaction.¹ Quality means service of hospital staff which include doctors, nursing, paramedical and supporting staff, and also infrastructure, equipment condition, other services like diet, pharmacy and laundry.² Quality is a continuous process of meeting demands of patients

and is crucial to customer retention.³ Standardised patient care leads to minimal error and leads to faster patient recovery.⁴ Effective services have a major impact on customer expectation and customer satisfaction.⁵ In India, health sector is one of the largest and fastest growing sector where emphasis is now put on patient satisfaction through quality of care.⁶

National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Health care providers (NABH) is a unit of Quality Council of India (QCI) which has set standards of

1. Maharishi Markandeshwar Medical College and Hospital, Maharishi Markandeshwar University, Solan, Himachal Pradesh, India.

Correspondence to: Dr. Manpreet Singh Nanda, Medical Superintendent and Professor, Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Maharishi Markandeshwar Medical College and Hospital, Maharishi Markandeshwar University, Solan, Himachal Pradesh, India. Email: drmsnfaimer@gmail.com

patient safety, quality care and infection control for its accredited/ certified hospitals. NABH standards focus on repeated staff trainings and policies development to improve skill, knowledge and patient centered care.² NABH standards promote guidelines to maintain quality services.⁷ Since our hospital has also been maintaining the NABH standards for the last 5 year, no study has been done in our hospital. Even in the region no reports have been found regarding the impact of implementation of NABH standards on patient satisfaction. Hence, we proposed this study to observe the impact of NABH standards on patient feedback and experiences and patient satisfaction.

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To specify the elements where there was more significant improvement in patient feedback and experiences to use them for further improvement
2. To specify the elements where there was less improvement or no improvement so that corrective action can be initiated.
3. To compare OPD (Outpatient department) and IPD (In patient department) services with regard to patient feedback and experiences

Methods

This study was conducted from patient feedback and patient experiences data collected by the Quality department of Maharishi Markandeshwar Medical College and Hospital through questionnaire. For the patients less than 18 years of age, the feedback was taken from patient relative. The data analysed were from October 2018 (before implementation of NABH standards) to October 2023 (after 5 years of introduction of NABH standards in the hospital). The NABH standards were introduced and implemented in December 2018 in the hospital. The permission of Institutional Ethics Committee was taken. The permission of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of the hospital was also taken to use the hospital data for research purpose.

The data analysed were as follows:

1. OPD patient feedback forms of October 2018 and October 2023
2. IPD patient feedback forms of October 2018 and October 2023
3. OPD patient experience forms of October 2018 and October 2023

4. IPD patient experience forms of October 2018 and October 2023

The feedback and patient experiences data was collected from OPD patients at the time of exit from hospital after treatment. It was collected from IPD patients at the time of discharge.

The results of the analysis were compared for:

1. Any improvement in patient feedback and experience after implementation of NABH standards for 5 years;
2. Areas where there was significant improvement and the areas where there was no improvement/ minimal improvement to find out ways to improve hospital services further; and
3. To compare OPD and IPD patient feedback and experiences to analyse the functioning status of both areas.

The statistical analysis was done using SPSS version 15.0 for Windows.

Results

Feedback and patient experiences were taken from 400 patients for both OPD and IPD for both months – October 2018 and October 2023 after implementation of NABH standards. Regarding OPD feedback, there was improvement in all elements of the questionnaire. The most improvement seen was in feedback about staff behaviour and communication skills of staff. The least improvement was seen in infrastructure and facility and clinical & ancillary services (Table 1). Regarding IPD feedback, the most significant improvement was seen in information about discharge & discharge summary, information about medications and staff behaviour and communication skills. The least improvement was seen in food quality and clinical & ancillary services (Table 2). Regarding OPD patient experience, there was significant improvement in patient education & waiting time experience and responsiveness of hospital staff experience. Least improvement was seen in pain management experience (Table 3). Regarding IPD patient experience, there was significant improvement for all the elements in the questionnaire except pain management where there was minimal improvement (Table 4). There was overall significant improvement for both OPD and IPD patient experiences and feedback. On comparing OPD and IPD results, patients were found to be more satisfied with IPD services as

compared to OPD services (Tables 1-4).

Table 1: OPD Feedback – satisfactory response

| Elements | October 2018 (n=400) | | October 2023 (n=400) | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------|--|
| | Infrastructure & facility | 368 (92%) | 376 (94%) | |
| Registration & billing | 344 (86%) | 368 (92%) | | |
| Staff behaviour | 320 (80%) | 368 (92%) | | |
| Sanitation & cleanliness | 324 (81%) | 356 (89%) | | |
| Communication skills | 328 (82%) | 368 (92%) | | |
| Clinical & ancillary services | 352 (88%) | 356 (89%) | | |
| Information about medications | 320 (80%) | 348 (87%) | | |
| Overall feedback | 336 (84%) | 364 (91%) | | |

Table 2: IPD feedback – satisfactory response

| Elements | October 2018 (n=400) | | October 2023 (n=400) | |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------|--|
| | Infrastructure & facility | 376 (94%) | 392 (98%) | |
| Registration & billing | 368 (92%) | 384 (96%) | | |
| Staff behaviour | 352 (88%) | 392 (98%) | | |
| Sanitation & cleanliness | 352 (88%) | 376 (94%) | | |
| Communication skills | 360 (90%) | 392 (98%) | | |
| Clinical & ancillary services | 384 (96%) | 392 (98%) | | |
| Information about medications | 352 (88%) | 392 (98%) | | |
| Food quality | 328 (82%) | 336 (84%) | | |
| Information about discharge & discharge summary | 344 (86%) | 392 (98%) | | |
| Overall feedback | 352 (88%) | 392 (98%) | | |

Table 3: OPD EXPERIENCE (n=400)

| | HAPPY | | NEUTRAL | | SAD | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Oct 2018 | Oct 2023 | Oct 2018 | Oct 2023 | Oct 2018 | Oct 2023 |
| Patient education & waiting time experience | 42% | 64% | 48% | 36% | 10% | 0% |
| Pain management experience | 44% | 46% | 46% | 46% | 10% | 8% |
| Patient comfort experience | 60% | 72% | 30% | 28% | 10% | 0% |
| Responsiveness of hospital staff experience | 68% | 84% | 20% | 14% | 12% | 2% |
| Overall hospital experience | 82% | 90% | 10% | 8% | 8% | 2% |

Table 4: IPD EXPERIENCE (n=400)

| | HAPPY | | NEUTRAL | | SAD | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Oct 2018 | Oct 2023 | Oct 2018 | Oct 2023 | Oct 2018 | Oct 2023 |
| Patient education & waiting time experience | 62% | 92% | 28% | 8% | 10% | 0% |
| Pain management experience | 68% | 73% | 26% | 25% | 6% | 2% |
| Patient comfort experience | 70% | 80% | 26% | 20% | 4% | 0% |
| Responsiveness of hospital staff experience | 70% | 87% | 22% | 13% | 8% | 0% |
| Patient safety experience | 56% | 67% | 38% | 33% | 6% | 0% |
| Overall hospital experience | 80% | 92% | 14% | 7% | 6% | 1% |

Discussion

The results of our study showed significant improvement in patient feedback and experience after implementation of NABH standards in the hospital. The improvement was seen for both OPD and IPD patients in our study. Similar results were obtained by Panchapakesan et al who also described better patient experience in accredited hospital.⁸ Similar results were obtained by Swathi et al in their study.²

In our study, we found with implementation of NABH standards for last 5 years, there was improvement in communication skills of hospital staff, patient education and waiting time experience, information about medications, information about discharge and discharge summary which led to greater patient satisfaction. Similar results were obtained by Yaghoubi et al. as they explained the role of NABH guidelines for maintaining quality hospital services.⁹

In our study, there was a significant improvement in staff behaviour and staff responsiveness towards the patients after implementation of NABH standards. Mosadeghrad also emphasized the impact of empathy by active listening, showing care and compassion which addresses customer emotions and concerns.¹⁰ In our study, there was improvement in patient comfort experience, infrastructure and registration and billing experience in the hospital. Such factors have a positive impact on patient feedback. These all parameters improve the service quality. A study

done by Podder showed that when patients receive high quality services, their satisfaction level increases.¹¹

Our study also showed greater satisfaction among IPD patients as compared to OPD. This can be attributed to greater period spent by patient with hospital staff and more lengthy and detailed care provided to the patients. However, no study in literature has compared OPD and IPD feedback.

Our study clearly showed benefits of NABH standards on patient satisfaction and feedback about hospital services. Similar results were obtained by other studies in literature.² As per study by Mandeep et al, accreditation of a hospital leads to better standardized treatment.¹² Another study done by Alkhenizan et al. in Saudi Arabia, showed the impact of accreditation on quality of health care and concluded that accreditation significantly improved the process of care by significantly improving the structure and organization of health care facilities.¹³ Another study in India by Sundresh et al. also showed that NABH standards implementation results in high quality care and patient satisfaction and patients are the biggest beneficiaries of NABH standards implementation.¹⁴ In India, another study done by Bajpai et al. also showed that NABH guidelines improve the quality of patient care.⁶

In our study, there was minimal improvement in certain parameters like clinical services, pain management and food quality. Clinical services and pain management services depend on the staff trainings regarding their speciality rather than quality, patient safety and infection control trainings. For these aspects focus must be put in future about department/ speciality specific

trainings.

The limitation of our study is that ours was a generalized hospital-based study and not department specific. Another limitation was that the feedback collected was for the whole hospital staff, not specific category of staff like doctors, nurses, technicians separately. In future impact of NABH guidelines on department specific and staff category specific patient feedback can be done.

Conclusion

Our data suggests that implementation of NABH guidelines improves the patient's experience in the hospital and feedback about the hospital services. The improvement was most significant about staff behaviour and communication skills. IPD patients were found to be more satisfied as compared to OPD patients. Implementation of NABH guidelines lead to greater patient satisfaction.

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Ethical clearance: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of Maharishi Markandeshwar Medical College and Hospital, Maharishi Markandeshwar University, Himachal Pradesh, India.

Authors' contribution: MSN was involved in conception and design of the study, while all authors were equally involved in data collection, analysis, manuscript preparation, revision and finalization.

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