



EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PATIENT SATISFACTION AND EXPECTATIONS AMONG FREE CLINIC PATIENTS

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Patient have the right to fully participate in the planning and implementation of their healthcare. In health policy, patient feedback is often used to better the policies that hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare organizations use to improve or change their health delivery methods. Thus, it is important that providers know what patients expect for the care they receive, so that they can address them and increase patient satisfaction.

Relatively few studies have looked into the expectations and satisfaction levels of free clinic patients who are low-income and a part of underserved communities. Socioeconomic factors play a large role as to what expectations—both idealistic and realistic—patients may have of their treatment. Realistic expectations are ones shaped by a patient's economic, social, and cultural background. Patients who utilize free clinics for example, would be prone to having realistic expectations relative to their understanding of the health care system (Bowling et al., 2013). This study examines the relationship between patient expectation and satisfaction. Sharing these results with free clinics will enable them to understand and improve their health care delivery methods.

Methods:

Self-administered paper surveys were given to patients 18 years of age and older at the Maliheh Free Clinic in Salt Lake City, Utah. This mainly volunteer-run free clinic provides health care services for uninsured people 150% below the poverty line. Patients were given non-monetary compensation for their participation in the study.

- Patients sampled:
 - 370 total participants
 - 73 U.S. born English speakers
 - 82 non-U.S. born English speakers
 - 215 Spanish speakers

Results:

Patient Satisfaction Rated 1-3 (most to least satisfied)	
Indicators	Results
1. Process of obtaining healthcare resources	1. Non US born Spanish Speakers 2. US born Spanish speakers 3. US born English speakers
2. Doctor Behavior	
3. Receptionist Behavior	
4. Consultation	
5. Expectation of treatment (for health concern)	

Patients with higher educational attainment and a history of being treated at the clinic were more likely to expect better treatment results. Patients with lower levels of satisfaction with their previous consultation or treatment were less likely to expect better treatment results.

Conclusions:

Country of origin, language spoken, education level, and previous treatment are factors in determining the satisfaction of care among free clinic patients. This study is cognizant with previous research on health clinics, in which doctors' skills, staff care, and education are the most important factors in patient satisfaction (Tung & Chang, 2009). Future studies should focus on a wider scope of free clinic patients (e.g. offering surveys in Portuguese or Tongan).

Bowling, A., Rowe, G., & Mckee, M. (2013). Patients' experiences of their healthcare in relation to their expectations and satisfaction: A population survey. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 106(4), 143-149. doi:10.1258/jrsm.2012.120147

Tung, Y.-C., & Chang, G.-M. (2009). Patient satisfaction with and recommendation of a primary care provider: Associations of perceived quality and patient education. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 21(3), 206-213. <https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzp006>