

## Is Post-Discharge Patient Satisfaction Concordant with the Reported Inpatient Experience? A Prospective Qualitative Cohort Study with a Nested Randomized Controlled Trial

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**Purpose:** Patient satisfaction measures, such as those collected by the Press Ganey survey, are now commonly used to evaluate clinical performance and are often linked to payment models. However, research on the correlation between patient satisfaction scores and actual patient experience in trauma patients is limited. This study aimed to quantify the correlation between patient satisfaction reported as an inpatient with that reported post-discharge. The secondary objectives were to identify hospital experiences that affect patient satisfaction, as well as the effect of the survey method (mail vs phone interview) on response rates.

**Methods:** The study was performed on the orthopaedic unit of a Level-I trauma center. Adult patients with an orthopaedic injury were eligible after 48 hours post-admission. Study participants were asked to rate their overall inpatient experience on a scale of 1 to 10, followed by open-ended questions on their hospital experience. Participants were then randomized to a second interview by either phone or mail at 4-6 weeks post-discharge, as this date corresponds with the time Press Ganey is given by mail. Inpatient and follow-up patient satisfaction scores were correlated using Spearman's correlation coefficient. Agreement between inpatient codes and follow-up codes was assessed using Cohen's kappa ( $\kappa$ ). Multivariable regression determined the association between the hospital experience themes and the patient satisfaction scores.

**Results:** 231 patients consented and participated in the study. The median overall patient satisfaction scores were 9.5 as inpatients (interquartile range [IQR]: 8-10) and 10 at follow-up (IQR: 8-10), with a moderate positive correlation between scores at the 2 time points ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). There was fair to no agreement between the themes reported at the 2 time points. Negative experiences with pain management ( $\kappa: 0.2$ , odds ratio [OR]: 0.4), the environment ( $\kappa: 0.2$ , OR: 0.6), and staff responsiveness ( $\kappa: 0.3$ , OR: 0.6) had fair agreement between the 2 data collection time points and were associated with a significantly lower patient satisfaction score. The response rates were significantly higher in the phone follow-up group compared to the mail follow-up group (69% vs 27%,  $P < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusion:** Surprisingly, we found that post-discharge patient satisfaction scores were only moderately correlated with inpatient satisfaction scores. Fair to no agreement was observed between the themes discussed by study participants in their inpatient and post-discharge interviews. The response rate for mail surveys was markedly inferior to phone call surveys ( $P < 0.01$ ). These findings all suggest that current patient satisfaction surveys, such as the Press Ganey, may have limited correlation with inpatient experience. In addition, the results question the ability of scores like Press Ganey that is mailed 4-6 weeks after discharge to accurately reflect inpatient patient satisfaction.