

Using patient experience data to develop a patient experience toolkit to improve hospital care: a mixed-methods study

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Declared competing interests of authors: none

Published October 2019

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr07360

Plain English summary

Developing a patient experience toolkit to improve hospital care

Health Services and Delivery Research 2019; Vol. 7: No. 36

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr07360

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Plain English summary

Most health-care staff working in hospitals want to know what their patients think about the experience of receiving health care. A range of different ways of collecting this feedback exists (e.g. the Friends and Family Test or via websites) but we do not know how health-care staff (e.g. nurses, doctors or physiotherapists) are able to use this information to improve services.

We worked with six wards across three NHS trusts in the north of England. A guide was designed (called the Patient Experience Toolkit) with health-care staff and patient representatives. The purpose of the guide was to help health-care staff use their patient experience feedback in a better, more useful way. Over 12 months in 2017/18, we tested this guide using a method called action research, which means that the researchers helped the health-care staff use the guide to make improvements and studied what happened. At the same time, an evaluation looked at whether the six wards were using the guide in a similar or different way.

Our study found that it was very difficult for health-care staff to collect together different types of patient experience feedback and work out the main point of what it was telling them to focus on. Instead, staff wanted to hear directly from their current inpatients. Therefore, on some wards, patient representatives collected more detailed feedback at the bedside. When staff looked at this feedback, they sometimes became upset and this needed to be handled sensitively. The six ward teams had different levels of success in using the guide to make changes. Having a researcher to help the teams was very important as the researcher was able to link teams to other staff in the hospital who could help. The guide was designed with ward staff and patient representatives, but it needs someone skilled in making improvements for it to be used successfully.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 14/156/32. The contractual start date was in November 2015. The final report began editorial review in July 2018 and was accepted for publication in February 2019. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

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