

## **Evaluation and quality improvement of hospital services. An explorative survey addressed to hospital users.**

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This study stems from considerations on the crucial importance of quality in health care within the Italian National Health Service as well as of the organization of health care services. It has become increasingly urgent to think about proper tools that might assure improvements either in the quality of professional health care – namely, capability in promoting, implementing, and evaluating technical skills to attain the established goals – or the quality of management and organization of health care, strictly connected with the role of the *management* of Public Administrations.

The aim of this work is to introduce an exploratory *customer satisfaction* analysis within hospital health care services. The notion of quality of the health care service has substantially changed over time, becoming richer and richer in those aspects that point out to the *perceived quality* (capability of the service to meet the patients'/clients' needs – reliability, trustworthiness, courtesy, admission, willingness to collaborate, communication, waiting list), definition of the offer standards (which must be subsequently translated into real services) and improvement of the actual level of performance (objective quality). The initial hypothesis is that if quality is an operational model of the daily medical activities, there are higher chances to benefit from better and more effective medical care; this is a great advantage for the status of the patient, who is simultaneously a “citizen-person-individual-ill person” whose needs must be acknowledged and met.

This survey was carried out for twelve months in a health care facility (hospital) located in the province of Catania (Sicily – Italy). Results show an overall positive level of satisfaction of users, a proper correspondence of users' expectancies to the *services* actually delivered, a positive relationship between personal experience and global judgement about the services delivered. In brief, patients' answers indicate the *desire* of patients to refer to the same facility; an *affective attitude* towards the service, relating to the kindness shown at admission by the medical staff as well as by the non-medical staff; perception of appropriateness of laboratories for examinations and common settings.

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