

Understanding the satisfaction factors that are most and least important to consumers when interacting with health care professionals

Dan Snodgrass¹, Janet Sudbrack¹

ABSTRACT

Background: The healthcare landscape is changing at a rapid pace and this is particularly true in the delivery of healthcare. The role of the patient has also changed and as a result the lines between consumer and patient have begun to blur. The reality is that patients are also consumers and now more than ever they are taking a more proactive and educated role in managing their health and wellbeing. The consumers of today have high expectations when it comes to the services or products they purchase and the same is true with their health care. Consumers expect more from their health care professional than they did in the past and when expectations are not met dissatisfaction grows. Dissatisfied consumers can impact the health care professionals' ability to deliver exceptional care and can limit practice growth or negatively affect reimbursement through ratings and reviews.

But what are the satisfaction factors that are most or least important in meeting or exceeding their expectations and why is that the case? While it is reasonable to hypothesize that relationship is an important factor in satisfaction there are other factors that are equally important. Some consumers are apt to prioritize factors related to quality or convenience of care, while others perceive value or choice as critical to their satisfaction. Therefore, the health care professional could potentially derive great benefit by better understanding what consumers really want and what is most or least important to them. The more that consumers buy in to the advice and expertise from the health care professional, the better the chance for improved health outcomes. In this new age of consumerism, now is a good time to take time to understand factors that impact consumer satisfaction.

Objective: We assess and quantify the satisfaction factors that are most and least important to consumers when interacting with their health care professional.

Design: Procter & Gamble (P&G) Personal Health Care conducted qualitative consumer research from May through August 2016 through a series of moderated conversations with 100 consumers male & female, age range 30 -70. This was done using consumer groups and one-on-one interviews to collect preliminary data on nine distinct satisfaction factors. A large quantitative consumer research survey followed in September 2016 to validate qualitative findings. The survey collected data from 509 respondents age 18-64 balanced by age, geographic region, and gender as well as an additional 101 respondents over the age of 65.

Conclusions: Consumers rated seven of the nine satisfaction factors [table 1] as very important to them in interactions with health care providers, but when forced to select which factor was most important; relationship, timeliness, and choice were consistently in the top three regardless of age, gender or generation. A focus on improving against these three satisfaction factors could produce a higher level of consumer satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

For over 175 years consumers have been the center of P&G business and these same consumers are also patients of the health care professional. Each year P&G interacts with millions of consumers; in their home, online, through advertisements or while they are shopping. They study their lifestyles, motivations, attitudes and behaviors to learn how to best communicate with them to better understand the context in which they might consider their brands. The research is then used to develop and deliver impactful messages. P&G has learned that consumers experience very specific moments of truth. These are points in time when they hear about a P&G brand, shop for the brand and use the brand. Moments of truth also exist in the delivery of health care. For example, one moment of truth might be when the consumer calls to schedule an appointment. Another might be when they are waiting for their appointment. But perhaps the most important moment of truth occurs during the interaction in the exam room. How that interaction is perceived goes a long way toward how the consumer responds to the health care professional.

By better understanding the factors that influence patient satisfaction it may be possible to help health care professionals win their important moments of truth. Then the professional, the teams they may lead, and their patients will benefit. The consumer research shared in this abstract was collected using proven consumer market research principals and done to assist the health care professional by augmenting their traditional knowledge of patient engagement. This is not intended to teach marketing principals to the health care professionals, but is about finding another approach to engage consumers in a meaningful way that might increase the odds that they will better follow advice, recommendations and instructions.

P&G's Personal Health Care Division has considerable experience and expertise in health care and has interacted with health care professionals for many years in promoting leading consumer self-care brands like; Nyquil, DayQuil, Vapo-Rub, Metamucil, Pepto-Bismol, Align and Prilosec OTC. More recently it has entered into partnerships with integrated health systems to develop appropriate self-care treatment pathways for self-care products that have clinically proven benefits. If consumer driven care is a reality, finding new ways to give consumers what they want, in the way they want is critical. Whether it is integrating consumer preferred self-care approaches into treatment pathways or studying what consumers want from their health care professional, the objective is similar. Gather insights to validate what is important and use those insights to improve interactions and increase consumer satisfaction.

¹ Procter & Gamble Personal Health Care, Mason, OH