



Taking action on

PATIENT SATISFACTION: *THE ULTIMATE GUIDE*

Simple Ways to Achieve High Patient Satisfaction

AN OPENING WORD

You already know patient satisfaction is an important metric upon which to focus and improve. But since it touches nearly every aspect of your practice, it can be daunting to prioritize your efforts.

We'll break down the tactics you need to **start enhancing and measuring patient satisfaction to boost your reviews, facilitate more referrals, and ensure higher retention rates.**

But first, what *is* patient satisfaction? It's certainly more than numbers or a score on a 10-point sliding scale. One source defines it as a patient's expectations for their care encounter, or "in other words, patient satisfaction is a subjective healthcare measure." But don't let that subjectivity intimidate you; patient satisfaction isn't always objective, but that doesn't mean it's difficult to address. It's also closely related to patient experience, which encompasses all of the interactions your patients have with your health care system. We'll show you how these concepts are intertwined, and how understanding the relationship between them can help you attain higher satisfaction rates and a top-notch patient experience.



IN THIS eBOOK

This eBook will give you an overview of patient satisfaction, including why it matters more than ever, how to turn patient priorities into a concrete plan for action, tips to master patient satisfaction surveys, and satisfaction lessons from other industries that apply to health care.

We'll advance your understanding of patient satisfaction and share specific steps you can take to start improving it (and the overall patient experience) at your practice.

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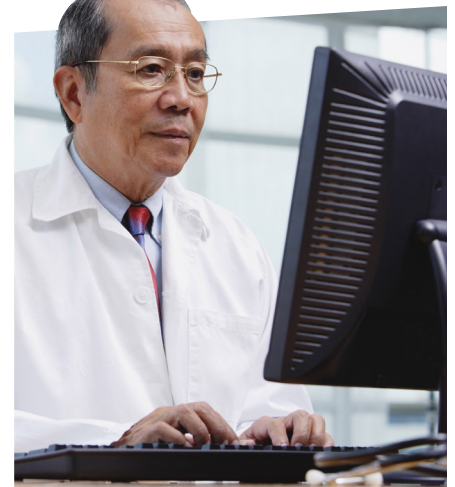
WHY PATIENT SATISFACTION MATTERS

Here are **three compelling reasons** to care about patient satisfaction, along with the effects it can have on your practice:

Your Practice's Profitability Depends On It

Studies of hospital financial performance indicate that “patients’ quality perceptions have been shown to account for **17 to 27 percent of variation in a hospital’s financial measures** such as earnings, net revenue and asset returns.” And losing a dissatisfied patient can result in the loss of over \$200,000 over your practice’s lifetime. So not only can high patient satisfaction boost your practice’s revenue—negative feedback can cost you thousands.

One report estimates that “satisfied patients share their experience with five others while unsatisfied patients will complain to nine or more people.” In the age of Yelp and Google reviews, you want to make sure that online dialogue about your practice remains positive and paints an accurate picture of the quality of your care.



PRO TIP

Make sure to check online review sites to monitor feedback about your practice.

High Satisfaction Helps You Retain Patients for Longer

Higher patient satisfaction facilitates higher patient retention rates. **Acquiring a new patient can cost up to 5 times more** than retaining an existing one.

Delivering excellent care and maintaining satisfaction means lower turnover rates and higher lifetime value for each patient—an investment in your practice’s future.

ACQUIRING A NEW PATIENT CAN COST

5 **UP TO**
X
MORE

than retaining an existing patient

Patient Satisfaction Affects Confidence in Physicians and Patient Outcomes

Not only does high patient satisfaction advance your practice’s reputation, it can also improve patient outcomes. “Patient satisfaction is not just a marketing tool,” says Dr. William Rich of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. “There is good evidence that patient satisfaction impacts physician confidence, and that leads to better outcomes. In addition, if patients are confident in their physicians, they are more likely to adhere to prescriptions for drug therapy, eye drops, and other long-term treatments.”

CHAPTER 1 RECAP

PATIENT SATISFACTION AFFECTS:



Your practice’s revenue



Your patient retention rates



Your patients’ confidence in their doctors
which influences outcomes

WHAT

PATIENTS CARE ABOUT

AND HOW TO IMPROVE

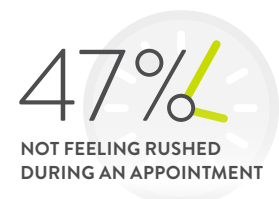
What do patients *really* care about?

Think of your patients' priorities as a launching point for your patient satisfaction strategy: when you know what drives their perceptions of care, you can use that knowledge to form an action plan to improve satisfaction.

When asked what providers can do to improve satisfaction, here are some basic priorities that patients report:

However, we also know that satisfaction is more than wait times and appointment scheduling—it's about the overall tone of patients' interactions with doctors and staff. Let's dive deeper into three aspects of patient experience that are paramount to patient satisfaction.

———— PATIENTS CARE ABOUT: ————



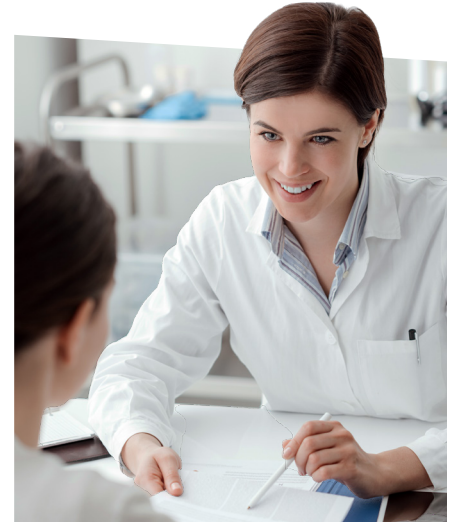
Staff Attentiveness & Coordination

Patients care about the attentiveness and coordination of your staff. Those two factors alone affect patients' stress levels, which in turn affect perception of care. When hiring new staff, assess communication skills and willingness to collaborate, and identify strong communicators in your team who can help ease the stress and confusion that patients often experience in the doctor's office.

Susan Edgman-Levitan, Executive Director of the John D. Stoeckle Center for Primary Care Innovation, recommends shadowing patients or having staff experience care through patients' perspectives, which can help practices identify roadblocks in the cycle of care. Not only does this help staff understand patients, but it also improves inter-staff communication and coordination. Patients want to feel heard and valued—so ensuring that your staff members engage them throughout their appointments can help your team proactively address complaints before they end up on Yelp, Google reviews, and Healthgrades.

Time Well Spent

The amount of resources that patients use may influence their satisfaction with care. In one study, patients who received more medical interventions and tests were more likely to report high satisfaction than those who received fewer medical interventions. Higher resource utilization may mean higher per-patient expenditure, but good medical practice is obviously not about encouraging patient spending in order to drive revenue—**it's about improving health outcomes.**



PRO TIP

To identify snags in your patient flow, try shadowing your patients for a day.



Still, some patients think that medical tests and antibiotic prescriptions are the answer to everything. A study in *JAMA Internal Medicine* reports that higher rates of antibiotic prescribing by doctors were strongly and positively correlated with higher patient satisfaction scores, despite the fact that antibiotic prescriptions were not strongly associated with improved clinical outcomes. **In other words, patients were most satisfied when they received something tangible, whether it was necessary or not**—but it doesn't need to be this way.

Doctors shouldn't have to risk over-prescribing antibiotics (which can lead to public health concerns like increased antibiotic resistance) or performing unnecessary medical tests to satisfy patients. So how can you practice good medicine while ensuring that you meet patients' medical needs *and* help them feel satisfied with their care?

The answer isn't as complicated as you might think: **patients need to feel that their visit to the doctor was worthwhile.** Time well-spent may look like a prescription slip...but it also may look like a personalized follow-up email with an educational video. Sending patients a video about treatment options for acute sinusitis or dry eye can be just as effective in making their trip to your office feel productive. In fact, patients are **twice as likely to recommend a provider when they provide educational information through narrated animations**, compared to text-based materials. Taking a moment to educate your patients can go a long way in increasing their satisfaction—and it can even result in higher referral rates.

PATIENTS ARE

2x

MORE LIKELY TO RECOMMEND

a provider when they provide educational information through narrated animations, compared to text-based materials.



Rendia's extensive library of narrated animations is the perfect tool to educate patients on their health conditions and treatment options.

Face-to-Face Time

Finally, face time with the doctor matters. Want to know the not-so-secret way to boost satisfaction (that costs nothing)? Doctors say that the most powerful influence on patient satisfaction is physician communication—the time you spend talking with your patients. Great bedside manner will never go out of style: 59% of patients report that face-to-face interaction with health care providers increased their engagement and satisfaction with care. And in one study, 85% of people interviewed emphasized the importance of having a doctor who listens to them.

Despite your scheduling constraints and limited time, **there are easy ways to make your time with patients count.** Subtle communication tools like eye contact and empathetic statements can be the difference between satisfied and unsatisfied patients.



SATISFACTION SPOTLIGHT

Five Care Tips

- 1 **Knock before entering the exam room**
- 2 **Take 7 seconds to introduce yourself when you enter**
- 3 **Smile and make eye contact with patient**
Ignore the EHR for a minute!
- 4 **Practice empathetic statements and questions**
Ask “What has this been like for you?” or “Can you tell me more about that?”
- 5 **Use the teach-back method to make sure patients understand**

Using an interactive anatomy tool like **Exam Mode** is another way to empower patients and show that you respect and care about them. In just 15 seconds, you can help patients understand their condition and orient them to the anatomy. Elevating the patient experience doesn't need to be time-consuming—all it takes is a little bit of focus and intentionality.



CHAPTER 2 RECAP

TOP TAKEAWAYS:



Patients notice how coordinated and attentive your staff is.

Hire and train staff members who understand what patients experience in your practice and are attentive to their needs.



Patients want their appointments to feel worthwhile and productive.

Follow up with patients by sharing information via educational videos to make them feel that their time was well-spent.



Patients value face-to-face time with their doctors.

Make sure you employ empathy-focused communication tools when you're with a patient.

MASTERING THE PATIENT SATISFACTION *SURVEY*

Distributing surveys may be the most obvious answer to measuring patient satisfaction, but it's important to be strategic and focused before you start handing out surveys to everyone in your waiting area. **Follow this checklist** to start implementing successful surveys!

Define Your Strategy

First, decide on the best strategy for your practice, and ask yourself this: how much feedback do I want, and what kind? Schedule a meeting to brainstorm priorities and goals with your colleagues.

If your goal is to collect feedback from as many patients as possible, you'll need an easy-to-complete, HIPAA-compliant survey system. If your goal is to collect more nuanced, specific information from your patients, consider inviting certain patients to participate in a focus group. Keep in mind that people with more extreme perceptions of care are more likely to complete surveys than those with a neutral experience, so you should expect more feedback on both ends of the satisfaction spectrum.



PRO TIP

Involve your whole team in strategy planning. Shared decision-making gives everyone a sense of accountability in the success of your practice.

Select and Measure the Right Metrics

Before you start gathering feedback, you need to know how your practice is currently performing. Take a look at these practice metrics first, so that you can compare results before and after you implement changes and improvements, measure your success, and make adjustments to your approach. Don't forget to record the metrics, whether that's tracking reviews over time in a Google Sheet or using your phone software to view reports of unanswered calls.



AVERAGE WAIT TIME

How long do patients typically wait before seeing a provider in your office?

Benchmark your practice against other specialists in your area. While you might not be able to eliminate waiting entirely, it's helpful to know how other practices measure up with yours.



MISSED INBOUND PHONE CALL RATES

How many phone calls does your staff actually answer?

On average, 25% of phone calls to medical practices go unanswered, and you don't want to miss an opportunity to connect with a potential patient or address the concerns of a current one.



ONLINE REVIEWS

What's your average rating on Yelp? How many stars do people typically give your practice in Google reviews?

Keep track of some common online complaints or praise that people have for you and your staff, and don't forget to respond to reviews.



DOWNLOAD

Free eBook!

For tips on managing and building your practice's online presence, download our eBook, "How To Build a Strong Online Brand" now.

DOWNLOAD 

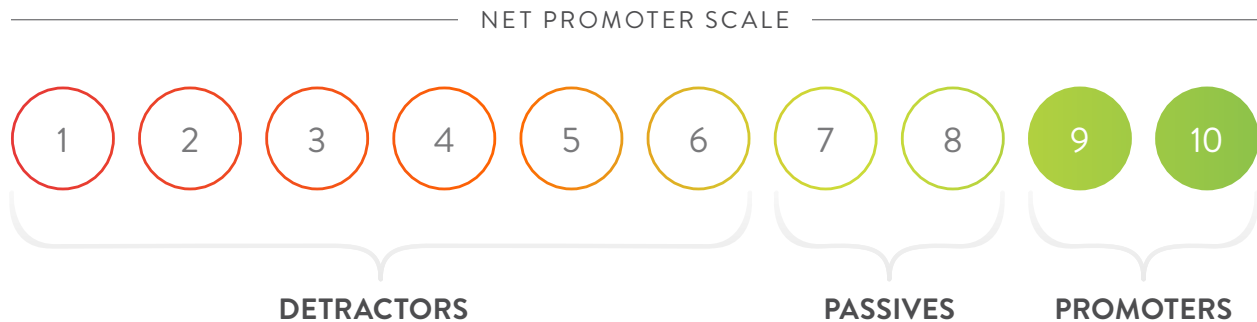
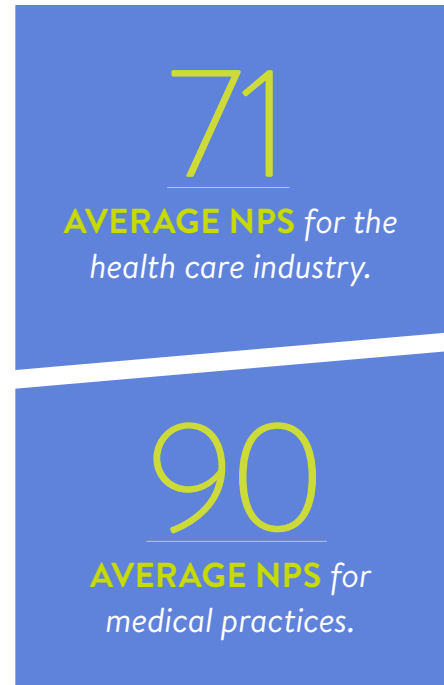


NET PROMOTER SCORE (NPS)

If you don't track your NPS, or you're not familiar with the concept, NPS is the "holy grail of satisfaction metrics", and it revolves around one question:

On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend our practice to a friend or colleague?

Detractors are patients who give your practice a score between 1 and 6. Passives are those who rate you between 7 and 8, and your Promoters are those giving you a 9 or 10. To calculate your NPS, subtract the proportion of Detractors from the proportion of Promoters.



As you design a longer survey to identify areas for change, make a plan to gather NPS data on an ongoing basis. It's best practice to ask the NPS question as a standalone, so instead of nesting it in a larger survey, send the question to a large group of your patients periodically and measure the results over time. The benefits of ongoing NPS measurements are many: it's easy for patients to fill out, and it's a quick way for you to evaluate your practice's referral potential.

Now that you have identified your survey strategy and goals and benchmarked metrics for success, you're ready to tackle the next steps: What questions should you include on your survey, and what should you do with the feedback?

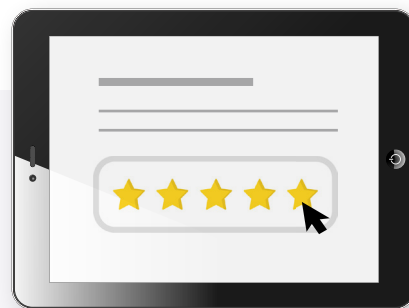
Craft Your Survey Questions

The best patient satisfaction surveys address three themes: 1) quality of care, 2) accessibility and appointment logistics, and 3) interactions with doctors and staff.

We have compiled some of the best survey questions to drive actionable feedback:

- How satisfied are you with your wait time before seeing a doctor?*
- How satisfied are you with the process of scheduling an appointment with us?*
- How would you rate the cleanliness and appearance of our office?*
- How satisfied are you with our level of patient communication?*
(i.e. pre-appointment reminders, follow-up communication, etc.)
- How satisfied are you with the care you received from our providers?*
- How well did you understand our explanations and instructions?*

Finally, if you want more feedback from your patients, include an open-ended section for them to share their comments and recommendations.



SATISFACTION SPOTLIGHT

3 Tips for Great Surveys

- 1 Use a consistent scale for responses**
Consider the differences between using a 5-point and 6-point scale. Will you allow neutral responses, or would you prefer to collect responses that skew negative or positive?
- 2 Limit the number of questions—make it quick and easy for patients to fill it out**
- 3 Digitize surveys to make it easier to track responses**
Try installing an iPad in your reception area with pre-loaded questions on the screen!

Use Survey Feedback to Drive Change

- Identify areas for improvement in your practice:** Is it wait time? Staff communication? Use the benchmarked metrics from your initial review to see how you compare to other practices in your area.
- Set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) quarterly goals:** Realistic goals give your staff something concrete to strive for each quarter, and help you stay accountable for progress.
- Add testimonials to your website:** Use positive responses to survey questions to highlight excellent experiences. Follow up with happy patients to record video testimonials—then feature them on social media or in your waiting room video playlist.
- Build positive satisfaction ratings into your staff's compensation structure:** Make sure to reward them for their efforts and facilitate a culture of positive patient experience.

CHAPTER 3 RECAP

ACTION ASSIGNMENTS

BEFORE THE SURVEY

Collaborate with your care team to identify your survey strategy and goals, and evaluate your practice's current success by analyzing metrics like wait time, inbound phone calls, and online reviews. ***Don't forget to track your NPS!***

DURING THE SURVEY

Ask questions that address quality of care, office environment and appointment logistics, and patient-provider interaction.

AFTER THE SURVEY

Use feedback to identify areas of improvement, set goals, highlight positive responses from patients, and compensate your staff.

LESSONS

FROM CUSTOMER SERVICE, RETAIL DESIGN, & AIR TRAVEL

Is health care a **service industry**?

This is a big question in the field today.

Like many other industries, health care involves a service, a customer, and a service provider. Of course, the stakes for health care are higher, and much more complicated, than the stakes for purchasing a new pair of boots.

While health care is a unique field, there are still many lessons to be learned from other industries. Providers can expect improvement in patient outcomes, practice efficiency, and overall satisfaction with care by adopting best practices from other industries to make customers feel cared for, respected, and valued. Heeding these creative tips can give you an edge on other practices in your area and set your patient experience apart from others in your specialty.



PRO TIP

To give your practice an edge on the competition, adopt some best practices from other industries.

Lesson from Customer Service: *Timeliness and Efficiency*

“Hello, this is _____, how may I assist you today?”

Call centers, a staple of the customer service landscape, focus on implementing best practices for different situations to make sure that they address customer concerns quickly and empathetically. With 69% of retail customers attributing good customer service to fast problem resolution, health care providers should take note—the conversation that happens at the receptionist’s desk may be just as important as the one that takes place in your exam room. A patient who receives a timely solution to a problem can be an even stronger advocate for your practice than a patient who sails through your practice with no concerns.

It may be time to sit down with your practice’s staff and discuss common concerns that patients voice during phone calls to the office. Since our memories can be fallible, ask your front-desk staff to keep a tally of common complaints—it will come in handy when you sit down to analyze the data later. **Draft your own list of “best practices” for each patient situation.** As a team, determine the most efficient and patient-friendly way to resolve concerns, and both your patients and staff will experience the benefits.



69%

OF RETAIL CUSTOMERS

attribute good customer service to fast problem resolution.



Lesson from Retail Design: *Ambiance*

Patient experience extends to the entire physical experience—including facility planning. The DO, published by the American Osteopathic Association, reports that patients comment on wait time and waiting area ambiance on online physician rating websites more frequently than they comment on the provider’s clinical skills.

Smart retailers like Apple know the secret to successful brick-and-mortar stores: **crafting an experience.** “People come to the Apple Store for the experience—and they’re willing to pay a premium for that,” says Harvard Business Review. By making the space experience-based and relationship-focused, Apple draws customers into their store, even when those same people could easily buy their products at Walmart or on Amazon.

How do you want patients to feel when they walk in? What kind of experience do you want to craft in your practice? Designers say that the combination of color, lighting, and noise help guide the patient experience, and these factors can lead to increased perceptions of interpersonal sensitivity and shared decision-making during patients’ interactions with doctors. Even offering a variety of seating arrangements can help reduce patient anxiety. Leveraging an experience-based, thoughtfully-designed facility can significantly reduce patient stress, increase their involvement in care decisions, and increase satisfaction.

PRO TIP

Offer a variety of seating arrangements to help reduce anxiety.



DOWNLOAD

Free eBook!

For design ideas and tips for creating the optimal waiting area environment, download our eBook: **“How to Design the Perfect Waiting Room for Patients.”**

DOWNLOAD 

Lesson from Air Travel: *Personalization*

In the airline sector, frequent flier programs personalize services and create new ones based on flier feedback. By proactively engaging this specific group and learning their priorities, airlines are able to segment their frequent fliers and categorize them by their reported needs. Then, they are equipped to respond accordingly—whether that means helping fliers move through the airport faster or delivering high-touch service throughout the journey.

Health care is similar: **there are a variety of “patient personas”**, and each group has different needs and priorities. Some patients care about efficiency during the appointment, while others want to discuss all the potential treatment options. Identifying the different priorities of each patient type and knowing which patients fall in each persona category helps you **strategically personalize care for a smoother experience**.



Patients are happier when they feel that their concerns are heard and acted upon, and ultimately, they are more likely to return year after year and recommend you to others!

CHAPTER 4 RECAP

LESSONS LEARNED:

TIMELINESS

Develop a guide of best practices for responses to common patient concerns to make phone calls more efficient.

AMBIANCE

Consider how physical elements like lighting and noise influence patient stress, and focus on crafting an elevated experience with thoughtful design.

PERSONALIZATION

Identify the needs of each patient persona to personalize care strategies accordingly.

FINAL THOUGHTS

NEXT STEPS

Now that you know how patient satisfaction impacts your practice, what patients value, and how to drive improvement forward, you're ready to apply what you've learned. The great news—you already have an advantage: you've learned a survey strategy to collect actionable feedback, and you even have a few clever insights from other industries to set yourself apart from other practices. You're almost there!

Whether your next move is gathering baseline measurements by distributing surveys or implementing teach-back methods in your patient consultations, your small steps can have a big impact. High patient satisfaction rates will strengthen your practice's reputation, boost your referral rates, and ensure patient retention.

Taking action to improve patient satisfaction is a step towards better patient experience and an investment in your practice's future. Not only will your patients benefit from the top-notch care experience that you deliver, but you'll also enjoy the fruits of a successful practice for years to come. **R**

LEARN MORE

About Rendia

Rendia equips practices to attract and retain patients, streamline consultation time and staff workflow, as well as boost referral rates. *Our interactive, video-based patient engagement platform is the perfect way to motivate your patients and drive them to take action—whether that means booking their next appointment, selecting a treatment, or recommending your practice to others.*

Schedule a Demo

Want to assess your current patient satisfaction strategy and start crafting an unforgettable patient experience?

Let us set you up with all the tools you need to be successful.

SCHEDULE DEMO NOW

