



ENHANCING HEALTHCARE QUALITY IN DOMESTIC HOSPITALS IN INDIA: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In-depth summary: reword, streamline for clarity and concision, including methodology, finding, and implications. Clearly focus on major themes as employee engagement, accreditation and patient satisfaction. This review addresses quality in healthcare in Indian hospitals; employee engagement, accreditation and patient satisfaction. This can be done by carrying a review of TQM practice and case studies that indicates areas of employee training, limit in accreditation and leadership were critical for the quality development. Improvements can occur only if the trainings are continuous, and integrative quality systems go beyond accreditation and leadership as matched to patient-centred care. These findings demand a holistic approach toward achieving sustainable quality improvements in Indian healthcare.

INTRODUCTION

Healthcare quality is one of the crucial factors determining the effectiveness of a country's healthcare system. In India, the healthcare sector faces significant challenges, including resource scarcity, high patient loads, and limited medical facilities. Recent data reveals that only 30% of hospitals in India have managed to maintain patient satisfaction levels above 70%, primarily due to long wait times and insufficient interaction between medical staff and patients. These challenges highlight the importance of improving healthcare quality to ensure that patients receive optimal care and meet the necessary standards.

The improvement of healthcare quality depends on several factors, including employee engagement, hospital accreditation, and patient satisfaction. Effective employee engagement through continuous training and skill development can improve service quality and operational efficiency. Hospital accreditation, such as that provided by the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH), acts as a tool to ensure hospitals meet specific healthcare standards. However, accreditation alone is not the long-term solution to ensure sustained quality care.

Additionally, patient satisfaction is a vital indicator in evaluating the quality of service in hospitals. The SERVQUAL model, used to assess service quality, can identify gaps in non-clinical aspects such as communication, responsiveness, and the hospital environment, all of which affect the patient's experience. Addressing these gaps will help enhance patient satisfaction and positively impact hospitals by building reputation and public trust.

Despite improvements in accreditation and the standards applied by hospitals, sustainable quality service can only be achieved with a more holistic approach. This includes continuous training for employees, better leadership management, and a quality management system that involves all parties in the hospital. Therefore, the crucial role of Total Quality Management (TQM) in hospitals in India must be strengthened to guarantee long-term and reliable service quality.

The purpose of this article is to examine and analyze the relationship between employee engagement, hospital accreditation, and patient satisfaction in the context of healthcare services in India. This review aims to explore how the implementation of TQM can enhance employee awareness, address challenges in accreditation, and improve the patient experience through better service delivery. Additionally, this article seeks to evaluate the limitations of accreditation and identify solutions to overcome these barriers, with a focus on sustainable quality improvement and a patient-centered approach.

METHODS

This review uses a systematic approach to analyze the relationship between employee engagement, accreditation, and patient satisfaction in Indian hospitals. Data were collected from peer-reviewed journals, case studies, and reports on healthcare quality, focusing on Total Quality Management (TQM) practices. The review also evaluates the effectiveness of accreditation frameworks such as the NABH and the role of leadership in fostering a culture of continuous quality improvement. Case studies highlighting the impact of employee training, patient feedback, and service quality models like SERVQUAL were incorporated to provide comprehensive insights into the current healthcare challenges and the strategies to overcome them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Employee Awareness and Its Role in Quality Management

A case study in Tamil Nadu's government hospitals demonstrates that focused TQM training improves staff awareness, resulting in better consistency in patient care and fewer lapses in quality. This emphasizes the importance of continuous employee training as a critical element of improving healthcare delivery. TQM's focus on employee engagement and its direct connection to improved patient outcomes suggests that more frequent and targeted training initiatives could significantly enhance quality management.

Accreditation: A Weak Tool for Quality Assurance?

While accreditation frameworks such as NABH standardize care delivery and set minimum quality standards, they are not sufficient by themselves for ensuring continuous improvement. Ongoing quality management, rather than simply attaining formal accreditation, is necessary for sustained healthcare quality enhancement. Accreditation helps in setting up a baseline, but true quality improvement demands a more comprehensive approach that integrates accreditation with active, dynamic quality management practices and continuous staff training.

Leadership Challenges in Healthcare Quality

Leadership is crucial for addressing systemic challenges in healthcare. Issues like financial limitations, regulatory pressures, and infrastructure deficits can hinder progress. Empowering leadership that fosters a collaborative culture and encourages continuous learning within healthcare teams is essential. Leaders must also ensure that quality initiatives are integrated into daily hospital operations, focusing on patient-centered care and involving all staff members in quality improvement processes.

Patient Satisfaction and Service Quality

Applying the SERVQUAL model reveals significant gaps in service quality, especially in non-clinical aspects such as responsiveness, communication, and the physical environment. A case study in a public university hospital found that patient feedback indicated poor responsiveness and communication as critical areas for improvement. Addressing these gaps through continuous patient

feedback mechanisms can help bridge service quality deficiencies and improve overall patient satisfaction.

Cost Evaluation: Ensuring Cost-Effective Quality Standards

International best practices, such as real-time data dashboards for quality metrics used in the U.S., could be beneficial in Indian hospitals. These dashboards allow for immediate response to patient care issues and could improve responsiveness in Indian hospitals, enhancing patient satisfaction while also being cost-effective. Adopting such practices could streamline quality management processes and allow hospitals to track and address issues more proactively.

Improving Home-Based Hospital Health Care Delivery: Recommendations

Employee Training: Conduct more frequent TQM workshops to ensure continuous training for frontline staff, improving the quality of care and consistency in patient treatment.

Leadership Development: Enhance leadership skills to better address healthcare infrastructure and financial challenges.

Patient Feedback: Establish continuous quality change tapping by implementing patient feedback systems to monitor satisfaction levels and identify areas needing improvement.

Accreditation Utilization: Use accreditation as a foundation but focus on long-term, dynamic quality management strategies to ensure ongoing improvements.



Figure 1. Patient Satisfaction And The Contribution Of Hospitals

The image above shows a pie chart illustrating Patient Satisfaction and the Contribution of Hospitals in terms of patient satisfaction levels. The chart compares two percentages:

30% Satisfaction: This segment represents 30% of patients who report a satisfaction level in the lower range (likely below 70%). The accompanying orange bar indicates that 30% of hospitals are contributing to this level of patient satisfaction.

70% Satisfaction: The blue segment indicates that 70% of patients are satisfied at a higher level (above 70%). The accompanying blue bar shows that 70% of hospitals contribute to achieving this higher patient satisfaction rate.

This visualization highlights the disparity in patient satisfaction levels and underscores the significant role hospitals play in improving or maintaining those satisfaction levels. The chart could be useful in assessing the effectiveness of accreditation efforts or identifying areas where improvements are needed, such as addressing gaps in service delivery or responsiveness, as indicated by the SERVQUAL model. It suggests that while a majority of hospitals are contributing positively to patient satisfaction, a significant portion still struggles to meet expectations.



Figure 2. Accredited Hospital Patient Satisfaction Index

The image above illustrates the Accredited Hospital Patient Satisfaction Index, comparing Patient Satisfaction and Patient Dissatisfaction in accredited hospitals. The pie chart is divided into two segments:

70% Patient Satisfaction: The blue segment indicates that 70% of patients in accredited hospitals are satisfied with the care they received. This suggests that the majority of accredited hospitals meet patient expectations, demonstrating the effectiveness of the standards and procedures established during the accreditation process.

30% Patient Dissatisfaction: The orange segment shows that 30% of patients in accredited hospitals report dissatisfaction. Although these hospitals are accredited, there are still areas that need attention to improve the patient experience, such as non-clinical aspects related to communication, responsiveness, or the hospital environment.

This chart highlights the importance of accreditation in improving patient satisfaction but also reveals that accreditation does not guarantee total satisfaction for all patients. While accredited hospitals meet the minimum standards set, long-term success in improving patient satisfaction still depends on ongoing efforts to identify and address service gaps. It underscores the need for a holistic approach that includes staff training, continuous quality management improvements, and ongoing evaluations to ensure that patients are satisfied with all aspects of the care provided.

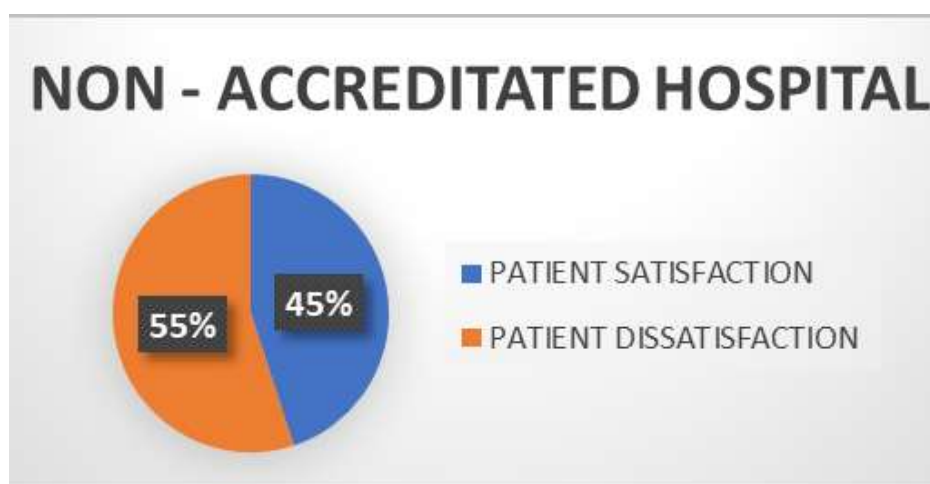


Figure 3. Non Accredited Hospital Satisfaction Index

The image above illustrates the Non-Accredited Hospital Satisfaction Index, comparing Patient Satisfaction and Patient Dissatisfaction in non-accredited hospitals. The pie chart is divided into two segments:

55% Patient Satisfaction: The blue segment indicates that 55% of patients in non-accredited hospitals report satisfaction with the care they received. While this shows that more than half of the patients are satisfied, it highlights the challenges faced by non-accredited hospitals in meeting patient expectations and providing consistent care.

45% Patient Dissatisfaction: The orange segment represents the 45% of patients who report dissatisfaction. This is a significant proportion, suggesting that nearly half of the patients in non-accredited hospitals are not fully satisfied with their care. This dissatisfaction may stem from various factors such as substandard care, inadequate facilities, or insufficient staff training.

This chart illustrates the disparity in patient satisfaction between accredited and non-accredited hospitals. Although a majority of patients in non-accredited hospitals are satisfied, the high level of dissatisfaction (45%) indicates a need for improvements in service quality, infrastructure, and staff training. Achieving accreditation could be a step towards improving patient satisfaction and ensuring that non-accredited hospitals meet higher standards of care, similar to accredited facilities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, improving hospital care quality requires a multifaceted approach, as no single strategy can address all the complex issues involved. Accreditation ensures minimum standards but is insufficient for long-term improvement on its own. Continuous employee training, particularly for front-line staff, is essential for effective Total Quality Management (TQM). Strong leadership is crucial in overcoming systemic challenges, such as financial and regulatory pressures, and fostering a culture of teamwork and communication. Patient-centered care, incorporating patient feedback, enhances satisfaction and bridges gaps in service delivery. A holistic approach, involving employee engagement, effective leadership, and patient-focused practices, is key to sustainable quality improvements, ultimately leading to better patient outcomes and greater community trust in healthcare services.

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