

ENHANCING PATIENT EXPERIENCE IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES



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At any time if my statement is found to be incorrect even after I graduate, the university has the right to withdraw my EMBA degree.

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ABSTRACT

This project focuses on enhancing the patient experience in private tertiary care hospitals by addressing key factors such as service efficiency, personalized care, and a supportive environment. Through the implementation of advanced healthcare technologies, comprehensive staff training in empathy and communication, and the establishment of effective patient feedback systems, the project aims to elevate patient satisfaction and loyalty. It also emphasizes facility upgrades for comfort and privacy, seamless care coordination, and active patient and family engagement in care decisions. By creating a detailed strategy document and applying continuous monitoring and improvement, the initiative seeks to improve healthcare outcomes, foster positive relationships, and position the hospital for sustained growth in a competitive healthcare landscape.

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of healthcare, patient experience has emerged as a crucial measure of quality and effectiveness. It represents the entirety of interactions that patients have with the healthcare system, including their experiences with health plans, providers such as doctors and nurses, and other staff across hospitals, clinics, and healthcare facilities. More than just a series of clinical encounters, patient experience captures what patients genuinely value: timely access to care, transparent communication, and respectful treatment by healthcare providers. These elements significantly influence not only patient satisfaction but also health outcomes, adherence to treatment plans, and overall perceptions of the healthcare system.

Understanding and improving patient experience is a critical step towards achieving patient-centered care, which prioritizes the individual preferences, needs, and values of patients. Unlike traditional care models that often prioritize efficiency and clinical outcomes alone, patient-centered care seeks to ensure that each patient's unique circumstances and desires are integral to the care process. This shift is essential for fostering an empathetic, responsive healthcare environment that aligns with the core mission of healthcare: to enhance the well-being of every individual it serves.

Differentiating Patient Experience from Patient Satisfaction

While often used interchangeably, patient experience and patient satisfaction are distinct concepts within healthcare. Patient satisfaction focuses on whether a patient's expectations were met during their healthcare encounter. This measure is inherently subjective, as different patients bring different expectations to their healthcare experiences. For example, two individuals receiving the same care could rate their satisfaction differently based on their personal expectations of service delivery.

Patient experience, on the other hand, delves deeper into the specific, factual aspects of care that are universally important to all patients, such as whether healthcare providers communicated effectively or whether care was accessible and coordinated. Unlike satisfaction, which is influenced by personal expectations, patient experience provides a more objective and actionable assessment of healthcare quality. It measures whether critical elements of care occurred, providing insights that healthcare providers can directly use to improve service delivery and patient outcomes.

Measuring Patient Experience: Tools and Approaches

Measuring patient experience requires reliable and standardized methods that accurately reflect the patient's perspective. One of the most widely recognized tools for this purpose is the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys. These surveys are designed not to gauge patient satisfaction but to collect detailed, specific data on various aspects of patient care, such as communication quality, accessibility of services, and care coordination. By using

consistent methodologies and well-tested questions across diverse patient populations, CAHPS surveys generate robust and validated measures of patient experience.

The insights gathered from CAHPS and similar tools are invaluable for healthcare providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders as they work to enhance care quality. By focusing on what actually happens during healthcare encounters, rather than just patient perceptions or expectations, these surveys provide a clear, evidence-based picture of the strengths and weaknesses within the healthcare system. This data-driven approach is critical for identifying areas that require improvement and for implementing changes that truly reflect patient needs and preferences.

The Role of Patient Experience in Quality Improvement

Patient experience is not just an optional metric; it is a core component of overall healthcare quality. High-quality care is defined not only by clinical outcomes but also by how well it meets the needs and expectations of patients. Positive patient experiences are linked to better health outcomes, greater adherence to treatment recommendations, and reduced use of emergency services, making it a vital aspect of efficient healthcare delivery. When patients feel heard, respected, and involved in their care, they are more likely to engage actively in their treatment plans, which can lead to improved health and well-being.

Patient-centered care, which prioritizes these aspects, is a critical element of healthcare quality improvement. It involves treating patients as active participants in their own care, tailoring treatment plans to individual needs, and ensuring open, honest communication throughout the care process. By making patient experience a focal point of quality improvement efforts, healthcare providers can create a more inclusive and supportive care environment that enhances patient trust, satisfaction, and overall health outcomes.

Moving Towards Patient-Centered and Value-Based Care

The growing emphasis on patient experience aligns with broader efforts to transform traditional healthcare systems into more patient-centered and value-based models. Patient-centered care seeks to enhance the responsiveness of healthcare services to individual patient needs, ensuring that care decisions are guided by what matters most to patients. This approach is particularly important in today's diverse healthcare landscape, where one-size-fits-all solutions often fall short of meeting the unique needs of different patient populations.

Value-based healthcare (VBHC) complements this patient-centered approach by focusing on achieving the best possible health outcomes at the lowest cost. VBHC aims to maximize value for patients by optimizing care delivery processes and aligning financial incentives with patient outcomes, rather than simply the volume of services provided. By integrating patient experience into value-based care models, healthcare systems can ensure that they are not only efficient and cost-effective but also genuinely responsive to the needs of the individuals they serve.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Healthcare System in Pakistan

Pakistan's healthcare system is characterized by a dual structure consisting of public and private sectors that operate in parallel. Historically, the public sector was managed centrally by the Ministry of Health, but with devolution, the responsibility for healthcare delivery has shifted to provincial governments. This change has expanded the administrative and fiscal scope of provinces, yet they continue to grapple with challenges such as inadequate healthcare workforce and facilities, which remain insufficient relative to the rapidly growing population. The public sector delivers healthcare through an extensive network that includes rural health centers, basic health units (BHUs), and other associated medical professionals, primarily serving rural and underserved populations. In contrast, the private sector plays a significant role in urban areas, where most of its facilities, including hospitals and clinics, are equipped with advanced diagnostic and medical technologies. As a result, private healthcare options are often preferred over public services due to perceived higher quality and accessibility. The private sector's prominence has grown as public healthcare facilities struggle to keep up with the increasing demands driven by Pakistan's high population growth, leading to a substantial gap that private providers have filled.

Challenges in Pakistan's Healthcare System

Despite its vital role, Pakistan's healthcare system faces numerous obstacles that hinder its ability to deliver effective and efficient services. A primary challenge is insufficient funding; Pakistan's healthcare expenditure is approximately USD 38 per capita, which is markedly lower than that of other developing nations such as India, the Philippines, and Ghana, which spend USD 57, USD 165, and USD 85 per capita, respectively. The country's allocation to the public health sector was only 1.2% of its GDP in the fiscal year 2020-2021, showing only a marginal increase from the previous year. This underfunding contributes to a host of issues, including inadequate infrastructure, shortages of essential medicines and medical equipment, and a deficit of qualified healthcare professionals, thereby compromising the overall quality of care provided.

Moreover, the public health sector is plagued by structural inefficiencies, resource constraints, and operational fragmentation, which have led to a diminished capacity to meet the healthcare needs of the population. Even when public health facilities are accessible, there is a notable preference for private hospitals and clinics, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with public healthcare services. This shift is further evidenced by household spending patterns; on average, Pakistani households allocate about 5.2% of their monthly expenditure to healthcare, with lower-income families bearing a disproportionately higher financial burden. In 2009-10, household health expenditures accounted for approximately 70% of the total health expenditures in the country, underscoring the heavy reliance on out-of-pocket spending for healthcare needs.

The Emergence of Patient Experience in Healthcare

As the private healthcare sector continues to expand, competition among providers has intensified, with many focusing on offering competitive pricing as a primary strategy. However, research indicates that among patients who can afford private healthcare, there is a growing emphasis on the quality of the healthcare experience rather than just the cost. This focus on "patient experience" encompasses the overall interactions patients have with healthcare providers, including the accessibility, communication, and comfort offered during their care.

Globally, the emphasis on improving patient experience aligns with broader efforts to enhance the quality of care, as reflected in several influential reports published in 2018 by the United States National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; the World Health Organization; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; and the Lancet Global Health Commission on High-Quality Health Systems in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) era. These reports collectively stress that achieving universal health coverage requires a focus on quality care that is both effective and person-centered. Person-centered care is defined as care that is respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs, and values, which is fundamental for improving health outcomes and patient satisfaction.

The concept of person-centeredness in healthcare has gained prominence since the early 2000s, notably following the Institute of Medicine's 2001 report on quality of care, which highlighted the importance of patient-centered approaches. Since then, numerous measures have been proposed to evaluate and improve person-centered care. While these measures aim to enhance accountability and foster improvements in healthcare delivery, their reliance on patient-reported experiences presents challenges in terms of consistency and clarity, making their application complex in practice

METHODOLOGY

This study explores patient feedback from a tertiary care hospital in Islamabad to propose strategies for enhancing patient experience. The hospital, a 100-bed facility, offers comprehensive services across medical, surgical, clinical, and diagnostic specialties. On average, 600 patients are admitted and discharged monthly from its inpatient department (IPD). Data for this study spans a 32-month period and includes 370 patient responses collected via a digital feedback survey. The survey link was shared with patients who had availed IPD services.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the identities of both patients and the institution have been altered. While the data is sourced from a single hospital, the analysis is designed to generalize findings to other tertiary care hospitals. The study further emphasizes the transformative potential of innovative technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools, to optimize repetitive processes, enhance personalization, and reduce operational burdens for healthcare teams.

RESULTS

From the dataset of 370 patient feedback entries, the department-wise distribution of complaints is as follows:

- **Administrative Department:** 90 complaints (24.3%)
- **Nursing Department** 68 complaints (18.4%)
- **Outpatient Department (OPD):** 23 complaints (6.2%)
- **Patient Care Department (PCD):** 18 complaints (4.9%)

Smaller departments or cross-departmental issues accounted for the remainder of the feedback. This breakdown identifies key areas contributing to patient dissatisfaction, with the Administrative and Nursing departments emerging as focal points.

Thematic analysis of patient feedback revealed the following recurrent concerns:

1. **Staff Behavior and Responsiveness:**
 - Complaints about staff attitudes, delays in response, and a perceived lack of empathy were prominent, particularly in the Nursing and Administrative departments.
2. **Inefficient Time Management:**
 - Long waiting times for appointments, procedural delays, and inefficiencies in service delivery were frequently mentioned.
3. **Communication Gaps:**
 - Inconsistent or unclear communication from hospital staff was a recurring theme, causing frustration and misunderstanding among patients.
4. **Administrative and Operational Challenges:**
 - Patients highlighted delays in administrative processes, coordination issues, and a lack of proactive handling of queries and concerns.
5. **Facility and Environment:**
 - Feedback included observations about the physical environment, such as cleanliness, accessibility, and comfort.

DISCUSSION

This study provides actionable insights into patient experience in a tertiary care hospital. While derived from a single institution, the findings align with challenges faced by similar healthcare facilities globally. This universality supports the generalization of recommendations for enhancing patient experience. The analysis also underscores the need for a dual approach combining operational efficiency with a human-centric focus to deliver optimal outcomes.

Patient experience is a cornerstone of healthcare delivery, reflecting not just the quality of medical treatment but also the operational and emotional interactions that define a patient's journey. Our analysis of 370 patient feedback notes from the inpatient department (IPD) of a tertiary care hospital highlights several key themes: dissatisfaction with staff behavior, inefficiencies in time management, communication gaps, and environmental discomforts. These issues are not unique to this institution but mirror broader challenges faced by healthcare systems worldwide.

The prominence of complaints related to administrative processes and nursing care underscores a dual challenge: the need to streamline operations while fostering a more empathetic and responsive staff culture. The feedback reveals that patients often feel frustrated by delays in service, unclear communication, and staff behaviors that lack warmth or attentiveness. These pain points are amplified in high-pressure environments like tertiary care hospitals, where operational complexity often overshadows patient-centricity.

A central observation is the untapped potential of digital transformation to enhance both efficiency and personalization in healthcare. Automation of repetitive tasks, such as appointment scheduling and discharge processes, could significantly reduce waiting times and improve operational workflows. Artificial intelligence (AI) offers even greater possibilities, from predictive analytics for resource allocation to virtual assistants that provide immediate responses to patient queries. Such innovations not only optimize the hospital's operations but also empower staff to focus on higher-value, patient-facing activities.

However, technology alone cannot resolve the human challenges identified in the feedback. A strategic focus on continuous staff development is critical. Hospitals must invest in training programs that emphasize empathy, effective communication, and cultural sensitivity. When staff are better equipped to manage the emotional and psychological needs of patients, overall satisfaction improves. Leadership should play a proactive role in embedding these practices into the organizational culture, ensuring that patient experience becomes a shared priority across all levels.

Moreover, real-time feedback mechanisms can be a game-changer. By integrating patient feedback systems with AI analytics, hospitals can quickly identify recurring issues, prioritize responses, and implement systemic changes. This creates a feedback loop that not only addresses immediate concerns but also drives long-term improvements. For instance, complaints about delays or inefficiencies can inform adjustments in staffing models or resource allocation during peak times. The physical environment of the hospital also deserves attention. Cleanliness, accessible infrastructure, and comfortable waiting areas are fundamental to a positive patient experience. Enhancing these aspects reflects respect for the patient's comfort and dignity, reinforcing trust in the institution.

In a broader context, the findings from this study resonate with the global shift towards more personalized and patient-centered care. Hospitals must reimagine their operations to align with evolving patient expectations, leveraging technology to reduce friction in the care process while maintaining the human touch that defines exceptional healthcare. Virtual care platforms, wearable health monitors, and AI-driven diagnostics are no longer futuristic ideas—they are essential tools for hospitals aiming to remain competitive and relevant.

Ultimately, the goal is not just to address complaints but to build a system that anticipates and prevents them. A strategic balance of operational efficiency, technological innovation, and compassionate care can transform patient experiences, setting new benchmarks for tertiary care hospitals. By integrating these elements into their framework, healthcare institutions can create environments where patients feel valued, heard, and cared for at every step of their journey.

THE CARESYNC EXPERIENCE MODEL

Enhancing patient experience in a tertiary care private hospital requires innovative strategies that go beyond traditional patient satisfaction metrics.

1. Personalized Care and Digital Engagement

Personalized care and digital engagement involve leveraging technology to tailor healthcare experiences to individual patient needs and preferences. This approach can include the use of AI-driven chatbots for initial consultations, providing patients with personalized health recommendations, and answering common queries instantly. Mobile apps and patient portals can serve as centralized platforms where patients can access their medical history, lab results, and upcoming appointments, facilitating greater involvement in their own care. Telehealth services can also be integrated, offering remote consultations that save time and reduce the need for in-person visits, especially for follow-ups or minor health concerns.

Advanced features like predictive analytics can be used to anticipate patient needs. For example, by analyzing patient data, the system can predict when a patient might require medication refills or when follow-up tests should be scheduled, automatically sending reminders. Moreover, personalized content such as educational videos or articles related to the patient's specific condition can be made available through these platforms, enhancing patient knowledge and engagement in their care.

- **Implementation:** Implementing this strategy requires investment in a robust IT infrastructure that includes secure patient data management systems, seamless integration of electronic health records (EHR), and user-friendly interfaces for both patients and healthcare providers. Training staff to use these digital tools effectively is crucial, as is ensuring data privacy and security to build patient trust.

- **Measurement:** To measure the success of personalized care and digital engagement, hospitals can track:
 - **Engagement Metrics:** Monitor app usage frequency, patient interaction with chatbots, and portal logins.
 - **Patient-Reported Experience Measures (PREMs):** Collect feedback specifically on digital interactions, ease of use, and the relevance of personalized information provided.
 - **Health Outcomes:** Assess improvements in patient adherence to care plans, reductions in missed appointments, and overall health improvements.
 - **Operational Metrics:** Analyze reductions in in-person visit requirements and improved operational efficiency, as telehealth and digital consultations reduce the strain on physical resources.

2. Hospital Environment Optimization

Optimizing the hospital environment goes beyond aesthetics; it's about creating a healing space that actively contributes to patient well-being. This involves implementing biophilic design principles, such as incorporating natural light, greenery, and views of nature, which have been shown to reduce stress and promote recovery. Noise reduction strategies, like soundproofing and the use of calming acoustics, can enhance the comfort of patients, especially in high-stress areas like the emergency department or intensive care units.

Smart room technology can empower patients by allowing them to control their environment through a tablet or voice-activated system, adjusting lighting, temperature, and entertainment options to their comfort. This autonomy can significantly enhance the patient experience by providing a sense of control over their surroundings, which is often lost in a hospital setting.

- **Implementation:** Redesigning a hospital environment involves collaboration between architects, designers, and healthcare professionals to ensure that changes are both functional and conducive to patient care. Incorporating technologies like smart room controls requires investment in IoT devices and systems that can be easily integrated with existing hospital infrastructure. Training staff on the importance of environmental factors in patient care and how to utilize new technologies effectively is also essential.
- **Measurement:** To evaluate the impact of hospital environment optimization, hospitals can use:
 - **Environment Satisfaction Surveys:** Tailor surveys to capture patient feedback on specific aspects of the environment, such as noise levels, lighting, and comfort.
 - **Health and Recovery Metrics:** Track changes in patient recovery times, the frequency of stress-related complaints, and length of hospital stays, which can indirectly reflect the impact of a healing environment.

- **Behavioral Observations:** Conduct studies observing patient behavior, such as how often patients use smart room features or the frequency of requests for environmental adjustments, which can provide insights into the effectiveness of the changes.

3. Proactive Care Coordination and Navigation

Proactive care coordination involves assigning dedicated care navigators or coordinators to patients from the moment they enter the hospital. These navigators serve as the patient's guide through the complex healthcare system, explaining treatment plans, managing appointments, and providing emotional support. They act as a single point of contact, which can greatly reduce the anxiety and confusion often associated with hospital stays. This strategy also includes the use of predictive analytics to anticipate patient needs, such as potential complications or likely follow-up requirements, allowing the hospital to proactively address these issues before they impact the patient experience.

Care navigators can also facilitate smoother transitions between different stages of care, whether that's from surgery to recovery or from hospital discharge to at-home care. This continuity ensures that patients feel supported throughout their journey, enhancing their overall experience and reducing the likelihood of readmissions.

- **Implementation:** Implementing proactive care coordination requires training staff to take on navigator roles or hiring dedicated personnel for this purpose. The hospital must invest in systems that enable seamless information sharing across departments, ensuring that care navigators have up-to-date information about each patient. Building strong relationships with external care providers, such as rehabilitation centers or home care services, is also important for effective coordination.
- **Measurement:** To measure the impact of proactive care coordination, hospitals can track:
 - **Wait Times and Patient Flow:** Assess reductions in wait times for appointments, tests, and treatments, as a well-coordinated approach should streamline the patient journey.
 - **Patient Feedback on Coordination:** Use PREMs focused on care continuity, communication, and overall coordination efforts.
 - **Health Outcomes and Readmission Rates:** Monitor health outcomes, adherence to treatment plans, and reductions in readmission rates, as these are indicators of effective care coordination.
 - **Navigator Engagement Metrics:** Track the number of interactions between care navigators and patients, and the nature of support provided, to evaluate navigator workload and impact.

4. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) for Patient Education and Stress Reduction

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies can significantly enhance patient experience by providing immersive environments for education, pain management, and stress reduction. VR can be used to guide patients through procedures before they occur, reducing anxiety by familiarizing them with what to expect. For example, patients undergoing surgery can virtually "walk through" the process, which demystifies the experience and alleviates fears. AR can be utilized for interactive education, such as visualizing how medications work within the body or demonstrating rehabilitation exercises.

Additionally, VR has been shown to be effective in pain management by diverting the patient's focus from discomfort through immersive experiences, such as virtual nature walks or calming visualizations. This can be particularly beneficial in settings like chemotherapy wards or during lengthy recovery periods, where the patient's emotional state significantly impacts their perception of pain and overall experience.

- **Implementation:** Integrating VR and AR into patient care requires collaboration with technology providers to develop tailored applications that suit the hospital's needs. Hospitals need to invest in VR headsets and AR devices, along with software that can be easily updated with new educational content. Training staff to facilitate these experiences and ensure they are used appropriately and safely is essential.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Patient Feedback:** Use qualitative feedback from patients about their experiences with VR and AR, including their perceived reduction in anxiety or pain.
 - **Pain Scores:** Compare pain scores before and after using VR interventions to quantify the impact.
 - **Engagement Metrics:** Track the frequency and duration of VR/AR sessions to understand patient engagement and identify the most popular applications.

5. AI-Driven Predictive Analytics for Personalized Care Paths

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and predictive analytics can be employed to create highly personalized care paths based on individual patient data, including medical history, genetic information, lifestyle factors, and real-time health metrics. By analyzing this data, AI can predict potential complications, suggest preventive measures, and customize treatment plans to optimize outcomes. For example, predictive models can identify patients at high risk of postoperative infections, enabling preemptive interventions such as targeted antibiotic therapy or enhanced monitoring. AI can also streamline administrative processes by predicting patient influx, optimizing staff schedules, and ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently to avoid delays and overcrowding.

This proactive approach not only improves the clinical outcomes but also enhances the overall patient experience by reducing wait times and improving the continuity of care.

- **Implementation:** Implementing AI-driven predictive analytics requires the integration of advanced data analytics platforms into the hospital's existing IT infrastructure. Hospitals must establish strong data governance policies to ensure data quality and security, and train healthcare providers on interpreting AI-generated insights. Collaborations with technology vendors specializing in healthcare AI can facilitate the customization of predictive tools to meet specific clinical needs.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Clinical Outcomes:** Track improvements in patient outcomes, such as reduced complication rates or quicker recoveries.
 - **Operational Efficiency:** Measure reductions in wait times, optimized staff utilization, and better resource management.
 - **Patient Journey Analytics:** Monitor the smoothness of care transitions and overall flow through the healthcare system as influenced by predictive insights.

6. Enhanced Discharge Planning and Post-Discharge Follow-Up

Effective discharge planning and robust post-discharge follow-up can greatly enhance patient experience by ensuring continuity of care beyond the hospital walls. This strategy involves creating comprehensive discharge plans that include clear instructions on medication, diet, activity levels, and follow-up appointments. Leveraging digital tools, hospitals can send automated reminders for medications and appointments, provide access to educational resources tailored to the patient's condition, and enable easy communication with care teams through telehealth platforms. Post-discharge follow-ups, conducted via phone calls, telemedicine, or home visits, can help monitor the patient's recovery, address any complications early, and provide emotional support. This proactive approach reduces the likelihood of readmissions and ensures patients feel cared for and supported during their recovery, significantly enhancing their overall experience.

- **Implementation:** Establish a dedicated discharge planning team responsible for creating individualized discharge plans. Utilize digital communication tools to maintain contact with patients post-discharge, and collaborate with community healthcare providers to support patients who may require additional care at home. Training staff in effective communication and follow-up techniques is key to ensuring that patients receive the right support.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Readmission Rates:** Monitor reductions in hospital readmissions as a key indicator of effective discharge planning and follow-up care.
 - **Patient Feedback:** Collect feedback on the clarity and helpfulness of discharge instructions and the quality of post-discharge interactions.

- **Follow-Up Adherence:** Track adherence rates to follow-up appointments and prescribed care regimens.

7. Empathy-Driven Communication Training for Staff

Enhancing patient experience is not just about the clinical care provided but also how care is delivered. Empathy-driven communication training focuses on equipping all staff members—from doctors and nurses to administrative personnel—with skills to communicate empathetically and effectively. This approach can help in acknowledging patients' emotions, addressing their concerns more holistically, and making them feel heard and valued. Techniques like active listening, maintaining eye contact, and using compassionate language can transform routine interactions into meaningful engagements. Empathy training also includes scenario-based learning, where staff members role-play various patient interactions to practice and refine their communication skills. This strategy helps build a culture of compassion and respect within the hospital, which can have a profound impact on patient experience.

- **Implementation:** Incorporate empathy and communication training into the hospital's ongoing professional development programs. Utilize workshops, e-learning modules, and peer feedback systems to continuously improve staff-patient interactions. Leadership should also model empathetic behaviors to reinforce the importance of this approach.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Patient Satisfaction Surveys:** Include questions specifically related to communication and empathy in patient feedback forms.
 - **Complaint Analysis:** Monitor the number and nature of complaints related to communication, aiming for a reduction over time.
 - **Staff Performance Metrics:** Incorporate communication skills into staff performance reviews and recognize or reward those who excel in patient interactions.

8. Health and Wellness Programs for Patients and Families

Offering health and wellness programs that extend beyond traditional medical care can enrich patient experience by addressing holistic needs. These programs could include nutrition counseling, stress management workshops, fitness classes, and support groups for chronic conditions. For example, a hospital could offer mindfulness sessions or yoga classes to help patients and their families cope with the stress of hospitalization.

Additionally, providing resources and workshops on lifestyle management for chronic disease prevention can empower patients and families to take proactive steps in their health journey. These programs not only improve the patient's physical health but also provide psychological support, creating a more positive overall experience.

- **Implementation:** Develop partnerships with wellness professionals, such as dietitians, fitness trainers, and mental health counselors, to offer a diverse range of programs. These services can be made available in-person within the hospital’s wellness center or virtually through webinars and online resources. It is important to integrate these programs into the patient care path and promote them actively among patients and their families.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Program Participation Rates:** Track the number of participants in various wellness programs to gauge interest and engagement.
 - **Health Outcomes:** Assess changes in patient health indicators, such as weight, blood pressure, or stress levels, following participation in wellness programs.
 - **Patient Feedback:** Collect qualitative feedback on the perceived value and impact of the wellness programs, focusing on how they contribute to the overall patient experience.

9. Integrated Multidisciplinary Care Teams

Establishing integrated multidisciplinary care teams involves bringing together various healthcare professionals—such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, and social workers—to collaboratively plan and deliver care. This approach ensures that all aspects of a patient’s health are addressed, from physical to emotional needs. Regular team meetings to discuss patient cases can provide a more holistic view, enabling the development of comprehensive care plans tailored to individual patient needs.

Such teams can also work closely with patients and their families to ensure that care decisions are transparent, inclusive, and reflect the patient's values and preferences. By fostering a culture of collaboration and communication among caregivers, the hospital can reduce care silos, improve care coordination, and enhance patient experience through more seamless and coherent care.

- **Implementation:** To implement multidisciplinary teams, hospitals need to establish clear protocols for team formation, roles, and communication channels. This may include setting up regular multidisciplinary rounds, using integrated electronic health records accessible by all team members, and promoting an organizational culture that values collaborative care.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Patient Feedback:** Use PREMs to gauge patient perceptions of care continuity and team communication.
 - **Team Efficiency Metrics:** Track metrics such as the time taken to reach care decisions and the frequency of communication breakdowns.
 - **Clinical Outcomes:** Monitor improvements in clinical outcomes, such as reduced complication rates or shorter lengths of stay, as indicators of effective multidisciplinary care.

10. Patient-Centered Design in Facility Layout

Patient-centered design involves restructuring the hospital's physical layout to prioritize patient convenience, comfort, and safety. This includes designing facilities with easy-to-navigate pathways, clear signage, and strategically placed information desks to reduce the stress of navigating a complex hospital environment. Waiting areas can be redesigned to offer more comfortable seating, access to Wi-Fi, refreshments, and engaging activities like digital entertainment or health education resources.

Furthermore, creating dedicated spaces for family members, such as quiet rooms or family lounges near patient care areas, allows loved ones to remain close and be involved in the patient's care. This approach recognizes the critical role that family and social support play in patient experience and recovery.

- **Implementation:** Engaging patient experience experts, architects, and healthcare professionals in the design process is crucial. Use patient and family feedback to inform design changes and pilot new concepts in small areas before broader implementation. Ensure compliance with health and safety standards while optimizing for aesthetics and functionality.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Navigation Time:** Measure the time patients spend navigating from one department to another.
 - **Patient Comfort Surveys:** Regularly assess the comfort and usability of waiting areas and common spaces.
 - **Family Feedback:** Collect feedback from family members on the accessibility and convenience of patient care areas.

11. Advanced Health Literacy Programs

Improving patient health literacy involves equipping patients with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions about their healthcare. Advanced health literacy programs can include personalized educational sessions, easy-to-understand printed materials, videos, and interactive workshops tailored to the patient's literacy level and language preferences. These programs aim to demystify medical jargon, clarify treatment options, and empower patients to actively participate in their care. By making patients feel more informed and confident in their healthcare decisions, these programs can improve adherence to treatment plans, reduce anxiety, and enhance the overall patient experience. Specific initiatives might include "teach-back" methods, where patients are asked to repeat information in their own words to confirm understanding, or the use of visual aids and decision-making tools.

- **Implementation:** Develop a range of educational resources in various formats to cater to different learning preferences and literacy levels. Train staff in health literacy best practices,

including clear communication techniques and the use of plain language. Implement these initiatives at key touchpoints in the patient journey, such as during admission, discharge, and follow-up appointments.

- **Measurement:**
 - **Health Literacy Assessments:** Evaluate patient understanding of their care through assessments or quizzes.
 - **Adherence Rates:** Monitor adherence to treatment plans and medication as indirect indicators of improved health literacy.
 - **Patient Empowerment Scores:** Include questions in PREMs related to patients' confidence in managing their health.

12. Enhanced Use of Telemedicine for Continuous Care

Expanding telemedicine services beyond routine consultations to include continuous care management for chronic conditions and post-acute care can significantly enhance patient experience. By offering regular check-ins, virtual monitoring, and remote management of conditions like diabetes or hypertension, telemedicine provides patients with the convenience of receiving care without the need to travel. This approach is particularly beneficial for patients with mobility issues or those living in remote areas.

Telemedicine can also support mental health services, offering virtual therapy sessions that are easily accessible and reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health care. Integrating wearable devices and remote monitoring tools allows healthcare providers to track patient health metrics in real time, enabling proactive interventions and more personalized care.

- **Implementation:** Invest in secure telemedicine platforms that integrate with the hospital's existing IT systems. Provide training for healthcare providers on delivering effective care via telemedicine, focusing on maintaining high levels of patient engagement and communication. Ensure compliance with privacy and security standards to protect patient data.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Telemedicine Utilization Rates:** Track the frequency of telemedicine visits and the variety of conditions managed remotely.
 - **Patient Feedback on Accessibility:** Use surveys to assess patient satisfaction with the accessibility and quality of telemedicine services.
 - **Health Outcomes for Remote Patients:** Compare outcomes for patients receiving telemedicine support versus traditional in-person care.

13. Patient Experience Officers and Patient Advisory Councils

Introducing Patient Experience Officers (PEOs) who are dedicated to overseeing and continuously improving patient experience initiatives can provide a focused approach to patient-centered care.

PEOs work closely with hospital leadership, staff, and patients to identify areas for improvement, implement new strategies, and monitor the effectiveness of patient experience enhancements. They serve as advocates for the patient's voice within the hospital, ensuring that feedback is acted upon promptly.

Involving patients directly through Patient Advisory Councils (PACs) allows the hospital to co-design care processes and environment improvements based on real patient input. These councils can include patients, family members, and community representatives who regularly meet with hospital staff to provide insights and recommendations on various aspects of the patient experience.

- **Implementation:** Appoint PEOs with a background in healthcare management and patient advocacy. Establish PACs with diverse representation to ensure that a wide range of patient perspectives is included. Create formal processes for collecting, reviewing, and acting on council recommendations, and ensure that PEOs are empowered to drive change within the hospital.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Implementation of PAC Recommendations:** Track the number and type of recommendations made by PACs and the rate at which they are implemented.
 - **Patient Feedback on Engagement:** Survey patients about their perception of the hospital's commitment to listening and responding to patient feedback.
 - **Impact Assessments:** Measure the impact of PEO-led initiatives on overall patient experience scores and specific areas of patient feedback.

14. Real-Time Patient Feedback and Service Recovery Programs

Real-time feedback systems, such as kiosks, tablets, or mobile apps, allow patients to provide immediate input on their care experience. By capturing feedback in real-time, hospitals can quickly identify issues and respond to them before they escalate. For example, if a patient reports dissatisfaction with room cleanliness or staff responsiveness, a service recovery program can be triggered to address the issue promptly, such as dispatching housekeeping or resolving communication breakdowns with staff.

Service recovery programs are proactive approaches to turning negative experiences into positive ones. They empower staff to take immediate action to resolve patient concerns, often involving steps like apologies, explanations, and quick corrective measures. This can not only improve the immediate patient experience but also demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement.

- **Implementation:** Set up real-time feedback mechanisms at key touchpoints, such as during check-in, after procedures, and at discharge. Train staff on the importance of immediate

response to feedback and equip them with the authority to make necessary changes quickly. Develop a clear protocol for escalating issues that cannot be resolved immediately.

- **Measurement:**
 - **Feedback Response Time:** Track how quickly feedback is acknowledged and acted upon.
 - **Service Recovery Effectiveness:** Measure the success of service recovery efforts through follow-up surveys with patients who reported issues.
 - **Trends in Feedback:** Regularly analyze feedback data to identify recurring issues and systemic problems that need broader interventions.

15. Comprehensive Care Transition Programs

Care transitions—such as moving from the hospital to home or from one department to another—are critical moments that can significantly impact patient experience. Comprehensive care transition programs aim to smooth these transitions through meticulous planning and coordination. This includes creating detailed transition plans, conducting thorough handovers between healthcare providers, and ensuring patients and their families are well-informed about the next steps in care. A key component of this strategy is the use of transition coaches or care coordinators who guide patients through these changes, ensuring that all necessary medical, social, and logistical supports are in place. By proactively addressing potential gaps in care and providing continued support post-discharge, hospitals can reduce readmissions, improve patient outcomes, and enhance overall experience.

- **Implementation:** Develop standardized protocols for each type of care transition, ensuring consistency and thoroughness. Transition coaches should be trained in communication, care planning, and patient education. The program should also include mechanisms for follow-up, such as scheduled calls or home visits, to check on patients' progress and address any emerging concerns.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Readmission Rates:** Monitor the rate of readmissions as a key indicator of effective transitions.
 - **Patient and Family Feedback:** Collect feedback on the clarity and effectiveness of transition plans and the support provided by transition coaches.
 - **Continuity of Care Metrics:** Track adherence to follow-up appointments and care instructions post-discharge.

16. Empowering Patients through Shared Decision-Making

Shared decision-making (SDM) is a collaborative process that allows patients to be actively involved in their healthcare decisions, especially when multiple treatment options are available. This approach respects patient autonomy and preferences, combining clinical evidence with the

patient's values and lifestyle considerations. SDM can be facilitated through decision aids, such as brochures, videos, or interactive online tools that outline the risks and benefits of each option. By empowering patients to take an active role in their care decisions, hospitals can improve patient engagement, satisfaction, and adherence to chosen treatment plans. This strategy not only enhances the patient experience but also leads to better health outcomes by aligning care with what matters most to the patient.

- **Implementation:** Train healthcare providers in SDM techniques and ensure they have access to high-quality decision aids. Create a supportive environment where patients feel comfortable expressing their preferences and asking questions. Incorporate SDM into routine care planning and ensure it is documented in the patient's medical record.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Patient Engagement Surveys:** Include questions about the patient's involvement in decision-making and their understanding of treatment options.
 - **Decision Quality:** Assess whether patients feel their chosen care path aligns with their values and expectations.
 - **Health Outcomes:** Evaluate whether SDM contributes to improved adherence rates and health outcomes.

17. Implementation of a Concierge Service Model

Adopting a concierge service model transforms the hospital experience by providing personalized, high-touch services that cater to patient and family needs. This can range from basic services like assisting with scheduling and transportation to more luxurious offerings such as private rooms, gourmet meal options, or personal care coordinators available 24/7. The goal is to create a hotel-like experience where patients feel valued and cared for in every aspect of their stay. Concierge services can also include handling non-medical requests, such as arranging for family accommodations, leisure activities for long-stay patients, or coordinating with external service providers like salons or personal trainers. This level of service helps reduce the stress of hospitalization and creates a more comfortable and supportive environment for patients and their families.

- **Implementation:** Establish a dedicated concierge desk staffed by professionals trained in hospitality and customer service. Ensure they are well-versed in hospital operations to facilitate seamless coordination with medical staff. Develop a range of service packages that can be tailored to the needs and preferences of different patient demographics.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Patient Satisfaction Scores:** Use satisfaction surveys to assess the impact of concierge services on the overall patient experience.
 - **Utilization Metrics:** Track the types and frequency of services requested to identify popular offerings and potential areas for expansion.

- **Revenue Impact:** Evaluate the financial viability of the concierge model by comparing service costs against increased patient retention or premium service charges.

18. Emphasis on Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being

Addressing the mental health and emotional well-being of patients is essential for a holistic approach to care. This strategy involves integrating mental health services into routine patient care, such as providing on-demand access to psychologists, social workers, or mental health counselors. Offering mindfulness training, stress-relief activities like meditation or art therapy, and support groups for patients and families can significantly enhance the patient experience. Hospitals can also implement early screening programs for anxiety, depression, or other mental health conditions commonly associated with illness or hospitalization. By proactively identifying and addressing these issues, hospitals can improve patient outcomes and create a more supportive care environment.

- **Implementation:** Develop partnerships with mental health professionals and organizations to provide a range of services tailored to patient needs. Integrate mental health assessments into the standard intake process, and provide ongoing support through inpatient and outpatient programs. Ensure that all staff are trained in recognizing and responding to mental health concerns.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Mental Health Screening Rates:** Track the number of patients screened for mental health conditions and the uptake of available services.
 - **Patient Feedback on Emotional Support:** Include specific questions in PREMs about the emotional support received during their care journey.
 - **Clinical Outcomes:** Monitor the impact of mental health interventions on overall health outcomes, such as recovery times or adherence to treatment plans.

19. Development of a Robust Patient Advocacy Program

A patient advocacy program involves the establishment of roles or teams dedicated to representing the interests of patients within the healthcare system. Advocates work to ensure that patient rights are respected, and they help navigate complex healthcare processes, address grievances, and mediate conflicts between patients and providers. This approach empowers patients by giving them a voice and ensuring that their concerns are heard and acted upon promptly. Advocacy programs can also include educational components, teaching patients about their rights, the healthcare system, and how to effectively communicate their needs and preferences. By fostering a culture of patient-centeredness and accountability, these programs can greatly enhance the overall patient experience.

- **Implementation:** Train patient advocates in healthcare policy, conflict resolution, and effective communication. Integrate the advocacy role into care teams and ensure that advocates are accessible to patients throughout their care journey. Establish clear processes for patients to request advocacy support and ensure that all staff understand the advocate’s role.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Resolution Rates:** Track the resolution of patient concerns or complaints handled by advocates.
 - **Advocacy Utilization:** Monitor the frequency of advocate involvement and identify common issues or trends.
 - **Patient Empowerment Surveys:** Assess patients’ perceptions of their ability to influence their care through advocacy support.

20. Implementation of Advanced Feedback Analytics and AI-Driven Insights

Utilizing advanced feedback analytics and AI-driven insights allows hospitals to capture, analyze, and act on patient feedback in more sophisticated ways. By employing machine learning algorithms to analyze feedback from multiple sources—including surveys, social media, and online reviews—hospitals can identify patterns and trends that might not be immediately apparent. AI can categorize feedback into actionable themes, such as communication issues or environmental concerns, enabling targeted improvements.

Real-time sentiment analysis can also help hospitals respond promptly to emerging issues, such as a sudden spike in complaints about a specific department. By continuously learning from patient feedback and making data-driven decisions, hospitals can enhance patient experience dynamically and efficiently.

- **Implementation:** Invest in advanced analytics platforms that integrate with existing feedback collection systems. Train staff to interpret AI-generated insights and apply them in practical ways to improve care delivery. Develop a feedback loop where insights are regularly shared with relevant departments, and progress is tracked against specific improvement goals.
- **Measurement:**
 - **Actionable Insights Generated:** Track the number of actionable insights derived from feedback analysis and the corresponding actions taken.
 - **Response Time to Feedback:** Measure how quickly issues identified through feedback analytics are addressed.
 - **Improvement in Experience Metrics:** Monitor key patient experience metrics before and after implementing changes based on AI-driven insights.

WAY FORWARD

Enhancing patient experience in tertiary care hospitals requires a shift from reactive to proactive care, supported by technology and rooted in empathy. This study identifies critical areas of improvement—communication gaps, inefficiencies, and the lack of personalization—and proposes actionable, scalable models to address these challenges. By integrating solutions like AI-driven care paths, immersive environments, and real-time feedback systems, hospitals can transform the patient journey into one that is seamless, personalized, and stress-free.

The implementation of these strategies promises measurable outcomes: higher patient satisfaction, reduced readmissions, and more effective resource utilization. Beyond operational gains, these initiatives empower healthcare providers to focus on what matters most—delivering compassionate care. Hospitals that leverage predictive analytics, digital engagement tools, and interdisciplinary collaboration can set new standards for patient-centricity while easing the operational burden on staff.

Looking ahead, the integration of community-based care ecosystems and AI-driven service orchestration offers a blueprint for the future of healthcare. These innovations will bridge the gap between hospital and home care, creating a continuous, supportive experience for patients. By investing in real-time analytics and hyper-personalized care models, hospitals position themselves to adapt dynamically to evolving patient needs and expectations.

In a competitive and rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, this approach is more than an enhancement—it is a necessity. The strategies outlined here not only elevate patient care but also reimagine the role of hospitals as hubs of innovation, setting a precedent for what modern healthcare can and should achieve.

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