# Literature Review-Strategies to Enhance Patient Experience

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**Abstract:** *The significance of patient experience cannot be overstated when striving for the delivery of exceptional quality care. This literature review aims to explore diverse strategies applicable to any healthcare setting, with the goal of enhancing the overall patient experience. A literature review was conducted using databases like Google Scholar, JSTOR, and PubMed, employing Boolean operators and special symbols to refine the search on patient management strategies and the patient experience in healthcare settings. The search focused on key subject words such as patient management, patient experience, patient satisfaction, strategies, and improvement. The results derived from the literature review highlight three key concepts that demonstrate effectiveness in enhancing the overall patient experience: (a) fostering patient engagement and strengthening the patient-provider relationship; (b) implementing practice transformation models, strategies, and programs; and (c) cultivating a positive workplace environment and culture. Furthermore, these identified concepts can serve as a foundation for devising tailored strategies to effectively manage and enhance patient experience based on specific requirements.*

**Keywords:** patient experience, patient satisfaction, patient management, enhancement strategies, practice improvement

## 1. Introduction

Patients are the core of health care systems and providing them with the best possible care according to their needs has become a mission for the health care sector (Hijazi et al., 2018). To achieve this mission it has become necessary for health sectors to understand the concept of patient experience. Patient experience involves all interactions of patients throughout the entire treatment plan including their perception of the care provided and is also influenced by the organization's culture (The Beryl Institute, n. d., as cited in Padilla, 2017).

Patient experience determines the quality of care provided by health professionals (Jenkinson, 2002, as cited in Kieft et al., 2014). Hospitals have recognized that for achieving success, patient satisfaction is necessary and therefore they have stressed on evaluating and reporting patient satisfaction measures since the 1990s (Fottler et al., 2002 as cited in Birkelien, 2017). However, "the great patient experience cannot be achieved without considering all possible aspects of the delivery care" (Padilla, 2017, p.229). Therefore, hospitals need to implement specific strategies directed to improve patient experience (Kash et al., 2018).

There are many assessment criteria and surveys available to measure and evaluate patient experience such as the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey (Dempsey et al., 2014). However, the types of patient management strategies that should be incorporated in the health care system to enhance the overall patient experience are still not widely established. Current literature provides mostly anecdotal evidence and case reports on patient experience strategies without backing them up with a confirmed theory or rigorous research (Kash et al., 2018).

In order to enhance patient experience, patient-centered care must be taken into consideration along with high-quality care services. Hospitals must recognize and appreciate patient experience as a core to achieve organizational success and obtain an added advantage in the competition (Birkelien, 2017). Considering the importance of patient experience, this article provides a narrative review of different strategies that healthcare leaders can incorporate to enrich patient experience.

## 2. Methods

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to explore scholarly research focusing on patient management strategies and the patient experience within healthcare settings. The search for relevant articles was conducted using the electronic databases such as GoogleScholar, JSTOR and PubMed. Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" were employed to refine the search results, alongside the utilization of special symbols such as the asterisk * and the dollar sign $, specifically in combinations like strategies$ and improv*. The key subject words used for the database search included patient management AND (patient experience OR patient satisfaction) AND strategies$ AND (improv* OR enhance). To streamline the findings, limiters were applied to databases, resulting in a more focused set of results. This meticulous process aimed to identify and compile pertinent literature contributing to a deeper understanding of patient management strategies and their impact on enhancing the overall patient experience in healthcare settings.

The articles were manually screened for relevance and attainability. Each article was carefully examined and either retained or excluded based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria encompassed the following elements: (a) adherence to peer-reviewed standards, (b) composition in the English language, (c) relevance to the subject of patient-centered care, and (d) a primary focus on management strategies aimed at enhancing the patient experience. Conversely, the exclusion criteria encompassed the following considerations: (a) studies failing to meet the inclusion criteria, (b) exclusion of non-English full-text studies, even if an English abstract was available, and (c) articles primarily centered on the theme of

pain management. Ultimately, ten studies fulfilled the inclusion criteria and were incorporated into the review.

### Content Analysis

Thorough analysis was conducted on all ten articles to identify key findings and primary themes. The articles were meticulously examined to extract pertinent information regarding strategies aimed at enhancing the patient experience. Subsequently, a thematic distribution of these strategies was performed. The literature review delineated three overarching themes: (a) Patient engagement and patient-provider relationship; (b) Practice transformation models, strategies and programs; and (c) Workplace environment and culture.

## 3. Results

### Patient Engagement and Patient-Provider Relationship

In order to improve patient experience and enhance clinical outcomes, strategies should focus on patients as a key player and need to include them in their personalized care process (Kash, et al., 2018). Similarly, Birkelien (2017) also stated that to provide services according to the patient expectations can be done by involving patients in their plan. Health professionals and other health workers need to shift focus from the paternalistic approach to the collaborative approach with the patients (Hijazi et al., 2018).

Patient and physician relationship is the most important aspect to improve patient experience (Emanuel and Emanuel, 1992, as cited in Kash et al., 2018). Whereas Kieft et al. (2014) emphasized that nurses have major impacts on patient experience as they spend more time with them. Similarly, according to Dempsey et al. (2014) patient-nurse communication is a fundamental aspect of patient experience. However, Birkelien (2017) concluded that to ensure patient engagement, physicians, nurses and all other clinical staff need to communicate and treat patients in the proper manner. Moreover, both physicians and nurses need to contribute equally to explain complete treatment plans and provide options to the patients to improve patient engagement (Birkelien, 2017).

### Effective Communication

Patient-provider communication plays a vital role in patient engagement and also in developing a better patient-physician relationship. Register et al. (2020) conducted a study to find the impact of the Acknowledge, Introduce, Duration, Explanation and Thank you (AIDET) tool developed by the Studer group on communication. They concluded that AIDET aided in increased understanding among patients and effective communication (Register et al., 2020). Connect, Introduce, Communicate, Ask and anticipate, Respond and Exit courteously (CICARE) is the formula which health providers at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Health incorporated to improve patient-physician communication (Padilla, 2017).

However, Dempsey et al. (2014) proposed some strategies that focus on activities instead of behavior tactics to improve patient-nurse communication. Those are "purposeful hourly rounding, bedside shift report, the use of whiteboards in patient rooms, earlier discharge planning and so on" (Dempsey et al., 2014, p.147). According to the HCAHPS data all the above listed strategies to improve patient engagement have proved to improve patient experience (Long, 2012, as cited in Birkelien, 2017).

### Empathy

Empathy plays an important role in patient-provider relationship as it increases faith in patients and alleviates fear, confusion, and anxiety. Caregivers who exhibit empathy towards patients are better at understanding patients' needs (Kash et al., 2018). Also, health leaders at UCLA Health believe that showing compassion and empathy towards patients and their families are important for improving patient experience (Padilla, 2017). Moreover, emotional support obtained from the health care providers helps patients to engage more during the treatment plan and also in the healing process after completion of the treatment (Birkelien, 2017).

Hence, it can be stated that empathy and effective communication play a vital role in improving patient-provider relationship and also patient engagement.

### Practice Transformation Models, Strategies and Programs

To improve patient experience and quality of care, health care leaders at different hospital settings have implemented different programs and models like value based purchasing program, care management processes (CMP), patient centered medical home (PCMH) model, comprehensive primary care plus and accountable care organizations (ACO) models (Jain et al., 2019). Moreover, Kash et al. (2018) mentioned that for improving patient experience, health care organizations need to develop standardized workflow processes with patient-centered care at the core.

According to health practice leaders, after implementation of the PCHM model, various changes have been noted: (a) assessment of performance related to targets and outcomes, (b) incorporation of electronic medical records system, (c) improved access for emergency cases, and (d) improvement in care management (Quigley et al., 2017). When Jain et al. (2019) examined the relationship between CMP and hospital performance by using Donabedian's model, the results obtained were not in favor of CMP as decreases in hospital performance were found. However, they found that certain practices like care coordination had positive relations with quality outcomes (Jain et al., 2019).

Dempsey et al. (2014) stated that the nursing process is a clinically focused and diagnostic approach to improve patient experience and motivates nurses to provide better quality of care. The nursing process includes various steps: (a) Assess, (b) Diagnose, (c) Plan, (d) Intervene/Implement, and (e) Evaluate (Dempsey et al., 2014). UCLA Health utilized a different approach to improve patient experience that includes 90 minutes leadership rounds twice in a week. Rounds have a consistent format: (a) Convene, (b)

Recognize successes, (c) Collection of feedback, (d) Debrief, and (e) Assign (Padilla, 2017). A similar kind of approach was found in the Cleveland clinic model which focused on root causes, process and norms, hourly rounds, and employee engagement and motivation (Kash et al., 2018).

Miranda et al. (2015) used a case study approach to emphasize the hybrid change strategies implemented at the Mayo clinic in Scottsdale to improve patient experience. Five strategies were recognized for redesigning the process. Those are (a) exploration, (b) optionality, (c) employee-driven, (d) production orientation, and (e) metrics-driven change strategies (Miranda et. al, 2015). Kash et al. (2018) agreed that the Mayo clinic model has a strong leadership approach with a dynamic organizational culture.

Hence, various hospitals have implemented different strategies, programs, models and processes to improve health care organization workflow pattern, quality of care and patient experience.

### Workplace Environment and Culture

Work environment and workplace culture are important for achieving a greater degree of success in providing quality of care. In the 4Ps strategic framework proposed by Kash et al. (2018), a workplace culture that provides authority to all health care providers and promotes teamwork ultimately enhances patient experience. A healthy work environment provides clinicians a satisfaction of their work by achieving desired organizational goals (Disch, 2002, as cited in Keift et al., 2014). Moreover, the workplace culture determines how health care providers behave, communicate with patients, and provide treatment (Kash et al., 2018).

Nurse participants stated that there are certain essential elements for developing a work environment which focus on providing high quality of care (Keift et al., 2014). Those are competency, adequate staffing, collaborative working relationships, autonomous staffing, authority in the practice, managerial support, and patient-centered focus (Keift et al., 2014). Jain et al. (2019) also recommended that hospitals need to engage practitioners more in decision-making and get their advice on designing and adapting new care management systems. Furthermore, obtaining suggestions from all the disciplines of a hospital can provide a broad and meaningful insight into patients' needs and aid in development of a better patient care plan (Hijazi et al., 2018).

Collaboration is the way to promote leadership and participation of nurses. Recognition of achievements, participation, and celebration of success result in greater long term work satisfaction and also encourage others to perform (Dempsey et al., 2014). Moreover, by encouraging teamwork, health care practitioners can learn from each other to achieve shared objectives (Keift et al., 2014). Quigley et al. (2017) concluded that after implementation of the PCHM model, practice leaders perceived that planning and coordination with the team resulted in improved domains of patient experience.

Understanding the importance of workplace environment and teamwork, many leading health care organizations have implemented Disney's Clarify, Align, Reinforce and Empower (C. A. R. E) Model that focuses on collaboration, alignment, empowerment and communication among workers and also with patients to improve patient experience (Kash et al., 2018). Similarly, at UCLA Health, practitioners used the following methods to enhance work culture: (a) teaching and training staff in communication and empathy skills, (b) communicating vision during management and staff meetings, and (c) celebrating individuals and teams who have demonstrated great empathy while providing care (Padilla, 2017).

"When patients experience a well-coordinated journey through the hospital and see staff members working in teams across departments, they feel that the hospital is focused on caring for them" (Birkelien, 2017, p.257).

## 4. Discussion

This literature provides an insight into the research topic of patient experience enhancement strategies. Patient experience is a complex concept influenced by many aspects of a care process (Padilla, 2017). Three main themes were identified that have an impact on patient experience. These are patient-practitioner relationship and patient engagement, practice transformation, and health care work environment. The literature review also covered various strategies related to these themes that can aid in improving patient experience.

From some of the literature, other factors were identified that played a part in improving patient experience. These are hospital accreditation (Hijazi et al., 2018), latest technology (Miranda et al., 2015) and physical facilities and amenities in hospitals (Birkelien, 2017). These were not included in the literature review as there were not many evidences to support their role in increasing patient experience. Therefore, future research is indicated on the above mentioned factors.

Some of the studies targeted specific groups such as nurses. Hence, some of the implications might not be applicable for other health professionals. The models presented in different studies were implemented at U. S. hospitals, thus results cannot be generalized and models might not be relevant to different health care settings. Although several research articles have described various strategies, still further research is needed to identify and develop one framework which could be applied at almost all hospitals. Also, longitudinal studies on practice transformation models are required to evaluate long term results. Moreover, further development on the concept of patient experience is also required (Kash et al., 2018).

With the aid of this literature review, health care leaders will gain knowledge of the various patient experience improvement strategies and will be able to apply them in their healthcare institutions. However, while making a patient engagement strategic framework, healthcare leaders need to consider the following points: (a) results from

previous applied strategies, (b) considering and aligning priorities, and (c) vision and goals (Padilla, 2017).

## 5. Conclusion

From the literature review, it can be concluded that patient experience is related to how patients are treated, respected and valued by health providers. Health leaders should develop and implement strategies with patient-centered care at the core. Moreover, leaders need to develop a standardized workflow process and create a healthy workplace culture to improve the quality of care provided and patient experience.

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