Strategies for Enhancing Patients' Complaint and Feedback Gathering Using the QCApp

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Problem Statement:

Despite the deployment of the customer complaints and feedback management application (QCApp) and its publicity by distributing information flyers on how to use it to patients and visitors to the clinic so that they could download and use it, the application was not utilized as expected. Four months later, with more than 150 flyers, it was observed that only two patients sent feedback. Apart from the ease of meeting requirements for the ISO 9001:2015 certification for the clinic, complaints and feedback management have been well documented as crucial to understanding the needs and expectations of customers and thereby providing insights to improving the quality of care (1).

Objectives:

To determine the reasons for poor utilization of the QCApp and to deploy better strategies for enhancing its utilization for managing patients' complaints and feedback.

Methodology:

An institutional qualitative study approach (2) using semi-structured one-to-one interviews with 22 patients and 5 staff was conducted between March and April 2023 at Primecare Fertility Clinic, Abuja, where the QCApp was deployed. A descriptive thematic analysis of the collected data was performed. Standard ethical procedures were followed to ensure voluntary participation.

Findings:

More than 80% of the patients are unwilling to download and use the QCApp due to several perceived reasons, ranging from data and phone space consumption, cumbersome processes, and the fact that complaints are not usually a common occurrence to a lack of interest and preference for anonymity. Staff generally lacked a thorough understanding of how complaints and feedback can be utilized to improve service quality. The QCApp had a number of shortcomings affecting the ease of user interactions. The publicity strategies were also ineffective and insufficient.

Solutions provided between May and June 2023 increased complaints and feedback to an average of 3 and 5 respectively per week.

Solution, Innovation, Implications and Practical Applications:

Strategies include the QCApp update to allow for direct inputs to the web application side without the need to download and install the mobile app version; only resolution-oriented complainants may require it. Since the QCApp is intended for multi-organizational usage, a customized web interface for the clinic was developed with its QR Code, including direct lodging of complaints and a feedback interface by staff on behalf of the patients, which patients can follow up via phone and email. Direct messages requesting patients to send their complaints and feedback via emails and phone numbers with links to the input interface, the display of the QR code on desk and wall notices, and publicity on all social media platforms enhanced complaint and feedback gathering.

Conclusion:

Organizations exploiting digital platforms and articulately following up with customers through understanding and addressing the barriers to implementation and utilization are more likely to gain the desired insights from enhanced complaints and feedback gathering.

Keywords: QCApp, utilization barriers, user interface, web application, patients' anonymity.

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