

## Patient Satisfaction Surveys Prompting Hospitals To Improve Patient Experiences

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The Wall Street Journal on Wednesday examined how hospitals nationwide are "mining patient satisfaction surveys to identify patient pet peeves and service problems" and using those findings to "adopt the family-centered-care approach, which advocates building strong partnerships with patients and their families to improve care." Hospitals have a history of conducting internal patient surveys, but "they haven't always acted on the lessons learned," the Journal reports.

According to a 2006 health care satisfaction survey by Press Ganey Associates, the industry in general "is not successfully responding to the opportunities for improvement presented by its customers." The report, based on surveys of more than two million patients at 1,576 hospitals nationwide, indicates that there is "a communication disconnect" between patients and providers. Press Ganey's Vice President of Public Policy Deirdre Mylod said the trend is starting to change as hospitals this year will be required to conduct patient satisfaction surveys to receive full Medicare reimbursements. The results of the surveys will be posted on the federal [hospitalcompare.hhs.gov](http://hospitalcompare.hhs.gov) Web site and "will allow consumers to see for the first time how hospitals are ranked by their patients -- and how they stack up to rivals," the Journal reports. The Journal also profiled several hospitals that have used patient satisfaction surveys to improve patient experiences.

Michigan-based hospital chain Spectrum Health addressed 18 areas where patients and families requested improvement and created a patient and family advisory council to help develop new hospital policy regarding visiting hours, medical-information privacy, and treatment decisions. Spectrum officials say inpatient satisfaction scores increased from the bottom third of the U.S. to better than 64% of U.S. hospitals. Kent Jackson, director of behavioral health and chair of the patient and family care team at St. Luke's Hospital in Iowa, said the hospital has increased patient satisfaction by offering perks such as activity carts for children in waiting rooms, loaner laptops with no-cost wireless access for adults and \$25 gas cards for patients who have had long waiting times. The hospital also has trained staff members to improve their communication skills, including eye contact and smiling (Wall Street Journal, 2/7).