

# Nurse-Patient Relationship In Health Care Delivery In Koforidua Regional Hospital

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#### **Abstract**

Caring for patients is paramount to nursing and all the paramedics and workers at the Koforidua Regional hospital should care for patients and be ready to help them. The hospital should be a place where people will be ready and willing to visit and as a public hospital the authorities should be able make it a place of choice. During the research, questionnaires were administered and 319 respondents responded to the questionnaire. The purposive and accidental sampling methods were employed for the studies and SPSS software was used to generate the results.

With this research, it came to that that more of the female and youth responded to the questionnaire. It also came to light that the nurses are polite and talk nicely to patients but the patients are not happy with the time and the process they go through before they create a new folder or collect their folders. Also, the patients are not aware of any channel or avenue to air their grievances.

It was recommended that the nurses should be given training on patients care and also a section should be created where patients could air their grievances.

Keywords: Care-given, Empathy, Koforidua, Reliability, Tangibles

#### 1. Introduction/ Background

Health care delivery is an important aspect of human existence and should be paramount to decision making of people. Ignoring patient's health as a human being will be catastrophic. The medical team in hospitals should work together to make the patient happy and even go a step beyond patient satisfaction to delight the patient. In Ghana, health care delivery is done by both private and public hospitals. Patients perceived that the private hospitals are more effective and efficient in service delivery in that they are able to deliver prompt services. The patients believe that the private hospitals are able to provide quick and better service than the public ones. However, the fees charged by the private hospitals are exorbitant and people are not perturbed about that. They are of the view that high fees mean better services and due to this they are ready to pay more for better service. Some of these hospitals at times do not have the requisite facilities and qualified medical team. There are instance where the specialist patients are going to contact will come from the public hospital because they are doing their 'part-time there. Even, there are some medical tests that cannot be done by the private hospitals unless the patients go to the public hospitals.

In Ghana, the public hospitals are funded and subsidized by the government and due to this more of the citizenry visit these facilities. The fees charged by the public hospitals are very moderate as compared to the private hospitals. They have the requisite facilities and the medical team there is very qualified. As the fees charged there is moderate a lot of people do go there for treatment and as a result lead to long queue in the hospitals. These also affect the service delivery of the medical team because the number of patients they need to attend to is beyond their capacity. There is always excessive pressure on the medical team to satisfy every patient in their outfit. As more patients visit the facility there will be delay in the service delivery and time spent at the hospital will be high. Patients will be frustrated if they spend more time at the facility and also patients jumping the queue being aided by the medical team as is not their turn. At the public hospitals as a patient if your relative or friend is a worker there the patient will be able to receive medical attention before any other patient.

Koforidua central hospital is a government owned hospital offering medical care/service to the citizenry in and around the eastern region of Ghana. As a public hospital, the government has been funding almost all the activities there and the fees charged as medical fee is very moderate. The hospital has the qualified staff as well as the facilities needed. The nurse-patient relationship at the hospital is appalling and some time ago the hospital was in the Ghanaian media for the bad reason. Patients complained of bad services received from the medical team especially



the nurses. Nurses were perceived to be rude, not co-operative, snobbish, and even some described them as sadist. There are instance where there are verbal exchanges between the nurse and patient in the hospital and even some patients are treated as 'kids' at the hospital.

Due to some of these actions and inactions by some nurses' patients now prefer to visit private hospitals for treatments than the Koforidua central hospital. This is having a ripple effect on the revenue and image of the hospital. The revenue and image of the hospital should be salvage so that the facility will be the first place of call when patients need to receive treatment of any kind. The perception held by the public about the hospital should be changed by the staff of the hospital.

Service quality is used by service organizations to satisfy their customers/clients in the business environment. Based on the service quality model, researchers identified the following five determinants of service quality, in order of importance (Kotler & Keller, 2009) reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. This research seeks to assess whether reliability, empathy and tangibles will affect the type of hospital patients would visit for treatments and attention.

For the research to be successful, the researcher set the following objectives;

- To determine whether the nurses of the hospital are ready to assist patients whenever they visit the facility;
- To assess whether the nurses care about the well-being of the patients;
- To determine whether patients are satisfied with the appearance of the nurses at the hospital. For the this research to be fruitful, the following hypotheses were set; Hypothesis 1:
  - Ho The nurses are polite and nice to patients whenever they visit the facility.
  - H1- The nurses are not polite and nice to patients whenever they visit the facility.

#### Hypothesis 2:

- Ho The nurses are ready to help patients whenever the need arises.
- H1 The nurses are not ready to help patients whenever the need arises.

#### 2. Literature review

As competition is keen in the health sector in Ghana, hospitals and clinics should strive hard to win more people to their facility to be able to stay in business. Staying in business also means maintaining your doctors, nurses, paramedic, etc. For the nurses to be effective and efficient in the discharge of their duties the hospital should provide the modern nurse with the necessary equipments or facilities to perform their function to satisfy the patient.

The roles and functions of nurse are caregiver, client advocate, case management, rehabilitator, comforter, communicator, and teacher. Caring for patients is central aspect to service quality in the hospitals (Glembocki & Dunn, 2010). As caring is a central part of service quality in the hospitals and not only the hospitals but also in all aspect of our lives, we should not down play it. The nurses should treat patients with care and respect and this could lead to the patients becoming loyal to the hospital and even recommending others to the hospital.

Ramanujam, Abrahamson and Anderson (2008) found that nurses recognize a connection between their working conditions and the ability to care. For the nurse to be industrious and provide care for patients the hospital should equip the hospital with the necessary facilities and this will enable the nurse to achieve the desired outcome (Langley et al., 2009). For the hospital authority to be aware of the attitude of the nurses towards the patients the directors could disguise themselves and visit the centre where care is given to patients (Renganathan, 2011). As nurses interact with patients and become acquaintances with them the nurses then become a source of marketing information for the patients (Tsai & Tang, 2008). The attitude and behaviour of the nurse would have effect on the image of the hospital and this could either increase or decrease the revenue of the hospital as well as the client base of the hospital.

Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) found that exactly under conditions of stress, risk, and complexity that relationships matter the most in determining success. When the conditions under which nurse offer services is in a deployable state then it will affect the output of the nurse. However, if the place where work is done by the nurse is devoid of risk and stress the nurse could give out their best and this will have effect on the service quality.

Based on the service-quality model, researchers identified the following five determinants of service quality, in order of importance (Kotler & Keller, 2009) and these are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. This paper is based on reliability, empathy and tangibles.



#### 2.1 Reliability

The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately in the service environment is very vital to service delivery. The facilities of the hospital should be reliable as well as the staff. The hospital should keep to the agreements made with clients and punctuality in service delivery should be considered. Deficiency in any of these would lead to dissatisfaction of the client and this in the long run affects the perception of the client. Queuing in the hospital for long delays and affect service delivery in the hospital (Pattarasinee, 2010). The hospital should make the patients feel at home and they should reduce the queuing time for the patient. Naik, Gantasala and Prabhakar (2010) found that patients are satisfied with prompt and speed of service delivery and due to this the hospital should be able to deliver on their promise.

#### 2.2 Empathy

Caring for the patient is of great importance in service delivery and the nurses should cater for the patient whenever they visit the hospital. The nurses should give personal attention to patients (Renganathan, 2011) and this could motivate the patient to be loyal to the hospital and even recommend the hospital to others. Renganathan further said nurses should provide patients with timely services as expected communicate with the patients and help them to have easy access to their folders, OPD services and doctors. Naik, Gantasala and Prabhakar (2010) found out that nurses should be given training in etiquette and empathy to enable them serve the patient very well. They also said the nurses should take feedback and suggestion from patients to improve on their service delivery. Open communication between nurses and patients would help prevent problems in the hospital (Du Plessis, 2010). The nurses should provide the patients with timely and trustworthy information to enable them feel at home and accepted (Ndubisi, 2007). Without information service delivery would be hindered and this could lead to dissatisfaction.

#### 2.3 Tangibles

The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, communication materials and other facilities are crucial to service delivery. The tangible things enable the client to make decision pertaining to the service that they are going to receive at the facility. The available facilities should be sufficient to serve all kinds of people (Naik, Gantasala, & Prabhakar, 2010) and this will add to the service delivery in the hospital.

#### 3. Methodology

The population for this research is 183,727 that is the total population for the New Juaben Municipality (www.statsghana.gov.gh). Out of this 399 people were sampled for the study. The total sample was gotten by using  $\frac{N}{183,727} \frac{N}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{N}{1+459.3175} = \frac{183,727}{460.3175} = \frac{183,727}{460.3175} = \frac{399.13}{1+459.3175} = \frac{183,727}{460.3175} = \frac{183,727}{460.$ 

$$n = \frac{183,727}{1+183,727(0.05)^2} = \frac{183,727}{1+459.3175} = \frac{183,727}{460.3175} = 399.13$$

Questionnaires were designed for the study and the researcher pilot test the questionnaires on some selected colleagues at Koforidua Polytechnic. After the test, some of the questions were re-set to suit the respondents. The researcher visited the hospital to seek the permission from management to enable the research to be done at their premises. Fortunately, the permission was granted by the hospital management and the next day the questionnaires were administered. The target respondents were the patients in the hospital and those who have been in the hospital for treatment before. In all 80% of the questionnaires administered were retrieved for the analysis. The researcher used both purposive and accidental sampling methods for the research. The researcher used the purposive sampling method for the patients in the hospital; this is because the patients there would have experience some form of treatment before leaving the hospital premises. The patients at the Out Patients Department (OPD) were given the questionnaire to answer, although it was not the best practice but due to time constraints the researcher could not use any other means to administer the questionnaire to the patients. Also, the researcher used accidental sampling method for the respondents who have received medical treatment from the hospital before. The researcher gave questionnaires to patients outside the hospital just to assess whether their opinions would be different from that of the patients in the hospital.

The mix research method was employed by the researcher for gathering data. That is both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. Survey method was used for the research and this is seen from the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire was group into personal information and information on service quality delivery in the hospital. The data analysis was done by the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17. The



hypothesis was tested by using the chi-square and also the percentages were used to get the opinions of the respondents used.

#### 4. Discussion of results

With the questionnaires administered, 80% were retrieved and with the help of SPSS version 17 the results were generated. Tables were generated and used for the analysis.

Table 1: Hypothesis 1 One-Sample Test

	Test Va					
			Sig.	Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t		_	Difference	Lower	Upper
The nurses are polite and nice to patients whenever they visit the facility	42.774	318	.001	3.138	2.99	3.28

Table 1 reports a p – value of 0.001. This p – value is less than the significance level of 0.05 that was selected for the study. As a result of this we reject the null hypothesis which states that the nurses are polite and nice to the patients whenever they visit the health facility and conclude that the nurses are not polite and nice to the patients whenever they visit the hospital.

Table 2: Hypothesis 2 One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
			Sig.		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Difference	Lower	Upper		
The nurses are ready to help patients whenever the need arise	39.063	318	.001	2.737	2.60	2.87

Table 2 reports a p – value of 0.001. This p – value is less than the significance level of 0.05 that was selected for the study. This means that the null hypothesis which states that the nurses are ready to help patients whenever the need arises will be rejected and conclude that the nurses are not ready to help patients whenever the need arises.

It was evident that 66.1% of the respondents were female and 33.9% were male. This means that the female attended the hospital more than their male counter-part during the time of the research. Also, the female prefer going to the hospital for treatment than the male.

With the age range, 47% of the respondents were between 18-25 years, 36.7% were between 26-30 years, 15% were also between 31-50 years and 1.3% for 50 and above years. This means that majority of the respondents were young and the working class in the town.

## Objective 1: To determine whether the nurses of the hospital are ready to assist patients whenever they visit the facility

Again, 4.1% of the respondents said the nurses are rude to them whenever they enter the hospital, 23.2% also said that the nurses are harsh towards them, 46.1% responded that the nurses are polite to them, 15.4% also said the nurses are respectful to them anytime they enter the hospital and 11.3% were indifferent to the question. In a nutshell, the nurses of the hospital are polite towards patients but the hospital should educate the nurses on patient care so that they will be able to relate to the patients very well.



It came to light that 11.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that they are provided with information whenever they go to the hospital, 47% also agreed to the fact that information is given whenever they enter the hospital, 21.9% were not certain about information provided by the hospital, 13.5% of the respondents disagreed to the fact that the hospital has being providing patients with information about where they should go for assistance and 5.6% strongly disagreed to the fact that the hospital has being providing patients with information pertaining to where they should go for assistance. In conclusion, the hospital provides patients with information pertaining to where they could be assisted and cared for. In the same way the hospital should try to assist patients who need information to enable them receive medical care. This assertion agrees with (Ndubisi, 2007; Du Plessis, 2010) that patients should be provided with timely and trustworthy information as well as open communication between them. Refer to note 1 table 3 for the analysis.

Here, 13.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that the nurses talk to them politely, 45.8% of the respondents also agreed that the nurses talk to them in a polite manner, 16.9% were not sure about the attitude of the nurses, 17.9% also disagreed to the fact that nurses talk to them in a polite manner and 6% of the respondents also strongly agreed that the nurses are polite dealing with patients. It came to light that the nurses talk in a polite manner to patients but there are a section of the patients who are not happy with the way the nurses talk or relate to them. Refer to note 1 table 4 for the analysis.

It was clear that 37.3% of the respondents said it is easy creating a new folder in the hospital and 62.7% also said it is not easy creating a new folder in the hospital. This means that the patients are not happy with the process they go through before they get a new folder to be used in the hospital.

With this question, 9.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that the paramedics at the OPD are helpful when retrieving folders, 44.8% also agreed that the paramedics are helpful, 35.4% were not sure about the help them receive from the paramedics, 7.8% disagreed that the paramedics are helpful when retrieving folders and 2.2% strongly disagreed that the paramedics at the OPD are helpful. In a nutshell, the paramedics at the OPD are helpful to patients when retrieving the folders. Also, there is a section that is not happy with the help they receive from the paramedics at the OPD.

The respondents were asked whether the nurses are available at the OPD, 35.1% of the respondents said the nurses are always available at the OPD, 50.2% also said the nurses are sometime available, 10% were not sure whether nurses are available and 4.7% of the respondents said the nurses are not available at the OPD. In conclusion, the nurses at the OPD are not always available to serve patients. This could also be due to the time the patient visited the hospital for treatment that is in the morning a lot of them will be available but in the evening only a handful would be there.

It was evident that 8.2% of the respondents said the nurses at the OPD are rude, 21.3% said they are harsh to them, 49.8% said they are polite to them, 11.3% also said they are respectful and 9.4% were indifferent. It can be concluded that the nurses at the OPD are polite and respectful. With this analysis also a section of the patients are not happy with the attitude of the nurses at the OPD. Refer to note 1 table 5 for the responses.

It came to light that 45.8% of the respondents said the nurses in the consulting rooms of the medical doctors coordinate the conversation between the doctor and the patient to their satisfaction, 45.1% said somehow they have been able to do that, 6% were not sure of the role played by the nurses and 3.1% also said the nurses do not do anything in the consulting room of the doctors'. In conclusion, the nurses in the consulting rooms of doctors help coordinate and assist patients whenever they visit the doctors in their consulting rooms.

Again, 53.3% of the respondents said the pharmacists are always available whenever they go for prescriptions, 34.8% said they are sometimes available, 10% were not sure whether the pharmacists are available or not and 1.9% said the pharmacists are not available whenever they go for prescriptions. In conclusion, the pharmacists are always available whenever patients visit their place for their prescriptions.

Also, 48.3% of the respondents said the staff at the dispensary and pharmacist sections are polite to them, 42.9% also said they are somehow polite and 8.8% were not sure about the politeness of the staff at the pharmacy and dispensary sections. This means that the staff at the pharmacy and dispensary sections are polite and friendly to patients whenever they visit the place.

### Objective 2: To assess whether the nurses care about the well-being of the patients

It was clear that 65.8% of the respondents said they have complained about the service rendered by the hospital and 34.2% also said they have not complained before to the hospital. This means that the respondents have complain



about a service they received from the hospital. In service delivery, only few people do complain about a service received but the rest take their business else.

Again,16.2% of the respondents complained about the service provided by the nurses, 11.4% complained about the facilities at the hospital, 32.9% complained about the attitude of the nurses at the hospital, 38.1% also complained about the time spent at the hospital and 1.4% complained about general issues at the hospital. In conclusion, most of the patients are not satisfied with the service provided by the nurses and the hospital in general. This is at variance with the assertion made by Glembocki and Dunn (2010) who said nursing is about care giving.

It was evident that 17.6% of the respondents said they are aware of the channel used by the hospital to channel their complaint, 26.6% said they are somehow aware of the channel, 21.3% were not sure of the channel used for complaining and 34.5% are not aware of any channel for complaining. In conclusion, most of the patients are not aware of the channel through which they have to send their complaints and they are not happy with that. This contravene the assertion made by Naik, Gantasala and Prabhakar (2010) who said the hospital should solicit feedback and suggestion from patients and this could improve on the service delivery.

## Objective 3: To determine whether patients are satisfied with the appearance of the nurses at the hospital

With this question, 26.3% of the respondents said the dresses of the nurses are excellent, 34.2% said their dresses are very good, 35.4% said their dresses are good, 1.9% also said their dresses are poor and 2.2% said their dresses are very poor. In conclusion, the dresses of the nurses at the hospital are very good and appealing to patients and this also encourage the patient to visit the hospital.

Also, 58.6% of the respondents said the hair-do of the nurses are kept well, 37.3% said it is somehow kept well, 2.2% were not sure of the hair-do of the nurses and 1.9% also said the hair-do of the nurses are not kept well. In a nutshell, the nurses have being keeping their hair-do neat and appropriate to attract patients to the hospital.

With the overall appearance of the nurses 35.7% of the respondents said the appearances of the nurses are very neat, 50.2% said the appearances are neat, 13.2% also said somehow neat and 0.9% also said their appearances are not neat at all. In conclusion, the appearance of the nurses is neat and presentable to the patients and this could attract more patients to the hospital.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

Nurse-patient relationship in service delivery is an important issue that hospital authorities should consider and make sure that both the nurse and the patient are satisfied with the relationship and are ready to work together as a team. Caring for the patient is paramount to nurse-patient relationship. During the research it came to light that more female and youth were interviewed for the research and the nurses at the hospital are polite and friendly to patients but some patients are also not happy with the nurses pertaining to their attitude towards them. It also came to light that the hospital has being providing patients with information about what they should do and also the nurses talk nicely to patients but the patients are not happy with the process they go through before they receive their folders.

Again, it came to light that the paramedics at the hospital are helpful but the patients are not content with their services meaning they expect more from this group and most of the patients have complained about the service rendered to them by the nurses and other paramedics in the hospital. Also, the channel for complaining is not known by the patients of the hospital but the patients are satisfied with the appearances of the nurses at the hospital.

Based on the research, the following recommendations are to be considered by the hospital authorities to enable the nurses and the paramedics serve the patients and the general public well;

The nurses should be given training or education on the importance of patient care so that they will relate to the patients in a good way. The authorities of the hospital could employ the services of a Marketing Consultant to inculcate the importance of patient care in the nurses and other workers of the hospital. This agrees with the assertion made by Naik, Gantasala and Prabhakar (2010) who said nurses and workers should be train on etiquette and empathy.

The hospital should also have sufficient nurses at all times during the day. There should be nurses for the morning, afternoon, and evening. Though this is done by the hospital but they should increase the number especially in the evenings to serve the patient.

The hospital could also help patients by allowing them to develop and have their own folder on-line to overcome the time spent at the folder section. This could also reduce the number of folders available in the hospital and create space for other important things in the hospital. This could reduce queuing at the folder section and enhance the service delivery. Pattarasinee (2010) said queuing for long affect service delivery so that this problem could be overcome. For this to work the hospital should provide the necessary facilities needed for this to be implemented.



Again, the hospital should have a section where complains could be channel through to enable patients to air their dissatisfaction and also commend some nurses or workers at the hospital. This section should be known to the patients and the general public and the process for airing grievances should not be cumbersome.

#### 5.1 Limitations and further research

During the research, the hospital authorities delayed the start of the work because the research was required to get approval from the authorities before any work could be done and also some of the patients were not ready to provide the needed information because of intimidation and the Ghanaian environment where access to information is difficult.

This research focused on the general nurses at the hospital and also only three determinants of service quality variables were used for the study. In future other researchers could only assess the relationship between the in-patient and the nurses at the wards and also responsiveness and assurance could be assess in relationship with nurses and patients in other hospitals.

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Notes 1

Table 3: Provision of information on where to go when you enter the hospital

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	38	11.9	11.9	11.9
	Agree	150	47.0	47.0	58.9
	Not sure	70	21.9	21.9	80.9
	Disagree	43	13.5	13.5	94.4
	Strongly disagree	18	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	319	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 4: The nurses talk to you politely when giving you direction or information on what to do.

	-	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	43	13.5	13.5	13.5
	Agree	146	45.8	45.8	59.2
	Not sure	54	16.9	16.9	76.2
	Disagree	57	17.9	17.9	94.0
	Strongly agree	19	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	319	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 5: The nurses' reaction at the Out Patient Department (OPD)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rudely	26	8.2	8.2	8.2
	Harshly	68	21.3	21.3	29.5
	Politely	159	49.8	49.8	79.3
	Respectful	36	11.3	11.3	90.6
	Indifferent	30	9.4	9.4	100.0
	Total	319	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2012