

Do patients' perceptions exceed their expectations in private healthcare settings?

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether patients' perceptions exceed expectations when seeking treatment in private healthcare settings in the Klang Valley Region of Malaysia. A survey was conducted among 191 patients in the Klang Valley Region of Malaysia to measure service quality of the private healthcare setting in Malaysia using SERVQUAL 5 dimensions model by Parasuraman et al. and three additional dimensions of the human element, when it comes to rendering good healthcare services, i.e. courtesy, communication and understanding of customers. The results revealed that the customers' perceptions did not exceed their expectations, as they were dissatisfied with the level of healthcare services rendered by private healthcare settings in that they felt that the waiting time of more than an hour to receive the service was excessive and, when there was a problem, the healthcare provider did not provide a response fast enough. Only eight service quality dimensions were studied. The sample investigated is relatively small, where three private healthcare settings were selected. It is recommended that hospital management should look into highlighted areas for which patients have high expectations. The paper adds to the existing body of research on healthcare service quality, particularly on patients' perceptions and expectations. Survey results should be useful for continuous quality improvement.