

Assessing the Quality of Care in Hospitals: A Tool for Management

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Assessing the Quality of Care in Hospitals

A TOOL FOR MANAGEMENT

Quality of care is—or should be—the primary objective of any health care facility.

How good is the health care provided by your hospital?

Are you a hospital administrator who wants to know how well you are doing in terms of delivering quality services? Do you want to be able to measure service quality with a cost-effective, easy-to-use tool? Do you want really usable results that you can compare from one assessment to another?

This quality assessment system is intended to fill this need. It is a tool developed specifically to help determine the quality of hospital services. It may be used either for self-assessment by hospital managers or for independent assessment of quality, for example, by Ministry of Health personnel. Used regularly, say at least once per year, the tool will help management gauge progress toward quality goals and rectify problems in good time.

The quality assessment tool consists of a questionnaire and an Excel quality assessment spreadsheet, which analyses the responses from the questionnaire. The tool is a complete package, containing:

- Instructions for using the system
- A copy of the questionnaire
- A diskette containing the spreadsheet

The Quality Assessment Questionnaire

You don't have time to figure out who to ask what, or how to assess their answers. No problem. The quality assessment questionnaire contains 66 questions intended for various categories of personnel or patients in the hospital. The questions are grouped under five headings related to quality of care: existence/availability of services; staffing; facility status; process/information; and patient satisfaction. These five areas are graded in their order of importance as contributors to quality of health care. Within each of these areas, individual questions are also weighted on the basis of their relative importance to the quality of health care.

The Quality Assessment Spreadsheet

You're an administrator, not a statistician. No problem. The use of the quality assessment spreadsheet assumes basic spreadsheet literacy, but the system is designed to be completely user-friendly. There is no need to enter formulas or to manipulate data.

The spreadsheet consists of four worksheets:

- Data Input
- Output by Quality Area
- Output by Department
- Summary Output

Quality Assessment System
User's Guide
Questionnaire
Diskette with Spreadsheet

For more information and technical assistance in using the Quality Assessment Tool:

email: abilby@msh.org
phone: 617- 524- 7799

To order the Quality Assessment User's Guide:

email: abilby@msh.org
phone: 617- 524- 7799

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Each worksheet has hyperlinks or icons to help the user navigate through the system. To move from one worksheet to another, all the user has to do is point at the hyperlink or icon for the desired worksheet and “click” the mouse.

☞ The **data input worksheet** is the ONLY one used for entering data. The worksheet is protected except for the area where you enter the responses.

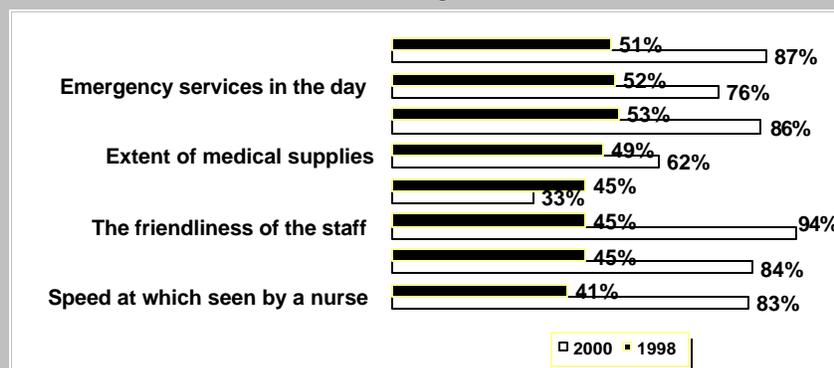
☞ The **output worksheets** analyse the responses. The spreadsheet presents the analysis in two ways: either by the five quality of care factors (service availability, staffing, process/information, facility status, patient satisfaction), or in the order of departments questioned according to the questionnaire, e.g., Medical Superintendent, Matron, Laboratory, etc. These are not departments in the real sense of the word, but are distinctions made for ease of administering the questionnaire. The two output worksheets are linked to the data input worksheet so that any change in data input is automatically effected in the “By Quality Factor” and “By Department” worksheets.

☞ The **summary output worksheet** summarizes the results of the quality assessment. Two types of assessment can be given here: by quality factor/area, for example, “Service Availability”, “Staffing”, “Process”, etc., and by department, as described above. Both summaries provide important management information.

How the Quality Assessment Tool Was Developed

The quality assessment tool for measuring hospital services was developed by Management Sciences for Health through the APHIA Financing and Sustainability Project in Kenya. Supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) through Contract No. 623-0264-C-00-7005, the project worked with the Coast Provincial General Hospital in Mombasa to strengthen management systems, improve the efficiency of fee collection, and develop nursing and medical staff organizations. The purpose of these activities was to improve the quality of care provided by the hospital. Baseline studies to audit the facility were conducted in 1997 and 1998, with a follow up in 2000. The quality assessment tool presented here is a refinement of the tools used in those studies.

Patients’ Assessment of Quality of Services at Coast Provincial General Hospital, Kenya – 1998 and 2000*



This chart was prepared from information based on the quality assessment questionnaire and spreadsheet. Hospital management can easily see that from 1998 to 2000 good progress was made in all but one service area—the availability of medicine—and in that area, from the patients’ perspective, the hospital is going backward. Management can use this information to take steps to prevent further deterioration of services.

* Hassanali, Z., “Quality of Care from Staff and Patient Perspectives at Coast Hospital, Kenya,” APHIA Financing and Sustainability Project, Management Sciences for Health, Nairobi, Kenya, 2000.