

Unit Six

Quality improvement and evaluating practice from a patient's perspective

Key messages

Once you have read this Unit, you should have an understanding of:

- *how patients can be sure they are getting the best quality service from general practice nurses (GPNs)*
- *different ways that patients can provide feedback to practices, such as patient-satisfaction surveys*
- *ideas for encouraging practices to involve patients more in decision-making about the services provided.*

Within general practices, GPNs play an increasingly important part in the delivery of care. More GPNs are taking on advanced roles by running nurse-led clinics where nurses take responsibility for your care. As a patient, you may wish to get involved with rating how well the GPN(s) in your practice provide care to you and other patients.

Patient's opinions are increasingly recognised as important in helping to raise standards of care,¹ for example, consider the extent to which your GPN:

- *gives you good advice about your health, consistent with that from GPs and other nurses in the practice team*
- *is generally helpful and listens to you*
- *has a respectful, kind and informative manner*
- *gives you a choice in your treatment.*

You might describe your experience and rate your satisfaction as part of a formal review organised by your practice. If you do give feedback to the practice, remember to include all the following points:

- *what was good about your care*
- *what was not so good*
- *how things could have been made better*
- *any suggestions for improvement.*

Everyone benefits from improvements in the quality of care that you and other patients receive. Look out for any notices in your practice about quality awards that the practice may have achieved or be working towards. There are a variety of other awards, such as 'Investors in People', which you may have seen in other businesses – these show that the practice takes quality seriously. Information about practice quality awards may be included in the practice leaflet or website.

Annual reports from the primary care trust (PCT) include information on the quality of the services being provided and on the programmes of improvement they are supporting. The PCT gains information from patient surveys, reports from the public engagement group, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service and from complaints. The PCT clinical governance committee looks for examples of good practice and identifies where improvements can be made.

You can make a personal impact on the quality of services and care provided at two levels – either by:

- *focusing on your own experience of the quality of care received from GPNs and other staff, and feeding back to the practice about what was good and what not so good*
- or
- *joining in patient groups or as an individual, trying to influence the delivery and planning of services.*

In order to make your voice heard, you could carry out any of the following:

- *attend patient forums*
- *feed back to the practice on specific issues*
- *complete patient-satisfaction questionnaires*
- *attend meetings run by the practice or PCT (as a lay person on a committee or at consultation events).*

To see what other patients feel are important quality issues within general practice, look at the national survey conducted on patient satisfaction.¹ You may wish to become a member of a patient and public involvement (PPI) forum. There is a PPI forum for every NHS trust and PCT in England. They are made up of local people who have an interest in health services within their local community. PPI forums help to raise awareness of the needs and views of patients and the public, and services available to them. For further information and details of how to contact your local PPI forum, see www.cppih.org.

Reference

1. Department of Health. *National Survey of NHS Patients: General Practice*. London: Department of Health; 1999. Available at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/02/36/11/04023611.pdf>.