

# Unit Eight

## Quality improvement from a patient's perspective

### Key messages

Reading this unit will:

- explain where to look for information about the quality of the care that your practice provides
- explain how practices use quality improvement methods
- describe how you can help your practice to improve the quality of the care that they provide.

Everyone benefits from improvements in the quality of care that they receive. General practice surgeries will display notices about any quality awards that they have achieved or are working towards. Some of these might include a Quality Practice Award or recognition of being assessed for the Quality Team Development programme – both of which have the support of the Royal College of General Practitioners (further information is available in [Tool – Quality Practice Award](#) and [Tool – Quality Team Development – for practice teams](#)). The practice might have an Investors in People award (see [Tool – Quality Tools from Business – Investors in People](#)), which indicates that they take quality seriously. Information about the practice's quality development programme may be included in the practice leaflet or on their 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 that they are promoting and facilitating. This report is based on information from patient surveys, reports from the public engagement group, Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), and from complaints. The PCT clinical governance committee looks for examples of good practice and identifies where improvements can be made.

### Patients influence quality

You can make a personal impact on the quality of services and care provided in your local practice. This can be achieved in two ways:

#### Influencing quality – personal feedback

Your individual experience of the quality of care received from health care assistants and other staff, both positive and negative, should be feed back directly to the practice.

#### Influencing quality – service planning

You can assist in the delivery and planning of services by joining patient groups or as an individual.

Patient forums, direct feedback to the practice

(see [Tool – Patient experience of care provided by a health care assistant – evaluation by a patient](#)) and patient satisfaction surveys are all opportunities to influence the quality of services provided by a practice. Other ways in which to make a difference to service quality are by attending practice or PCT meetings.

## Tips and hints for developing your involvement in quality issues

If you are keen to support your practice and local health economy in continuing to develop quality services you could:

- offer to participate in patient forums and feedback to the practice on specific issues
- complete a patient satisfaction survey form if asked to do so
- enquire at your local PCT about becoming a lay member on one of their committees
- watch out in the local press for invitations to consultation events
- review what other patients feel are important quality indicators within general practice by looking at the national survey conducted on patient satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>
- find out about becoming a member of a Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) forum. There is PPI for every NHS trust and PCT in England. They are made up of local people who are enthusiastic and have an interest in influencing the way that health services are organised and delivered 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, please visit <http://www.cppih.org>

### Summary

- Your practice and PCT will provide information about the quality of the care that your practice provides.
- Practices use quality improvement methods to help them to identify ways that the care they provide can be improved.
- You can help your practice by giving feedback on the care that you receive.

### Reference

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