General practitioners’ experience and benefits from patient evaluations

Patient evaluation of medical delivery should help identify the short-comings of the healthcare delivery system and may point to their correction. GPs as well as any health care system could benefit from such an exercise. All of us have room to improve in delivery of care. Such an evaluation can be sponsored by a professional organization representing the entire membership. Alternatively, the organizations running the general practice could ask their membership to participate in the exercise. The information gained could be used both to correct the deficiencies and to satisfy the patient’s needs.

This study was carried out with the EUROPEP questionnaire of patients for the 597 voluntarily participating GPs. Inclusion of only the volunteering GPs makes the information incomplete and unbalanced. However, it is a beginning, a useful beginning to understand the psychological dynamics of GPs who undergo patient evaluation process.

Relatively a large number of GPs, 79.4%, responded to the questionnaire addressing their experience with the patient evaluations and any benefit they obtained. Many learned about patient perspective on the quality of care. 77% learned something from the evaluation and 54% made changes to improve practice. Tabulation of actual improvement, such as facilitating appointments, explaining the diagnostic procedures or planned therapy in more easily understood terms, would have been practically useful information.

Emphasis on the improvement in the quality of care for the patients, utilizing the patient evaluation as the jumping board, in the discussion of the general membership could stimulate the entire membership including those reluctant to participate in the patient evaluation to join in the important effort to improve care. Those who are reluctant to participate in the exercise may precisely be the ones most likely to gain.

It is understandable that those GPs who received below average evaluation would feel the process unpleasant.

Using the average of GPs’ work as the standard of care in this study has merits. Alternatively, using the practice guidelines of various disciplines where one exists to assess the GPs’ work would have been more useful. Ideally, delivery of care should meet the practice guidelines.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.