



Service Priorities and Programmes
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The first year of Red, Yellow and Green : A stratified approach to complaint management

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Introduction

Traditionally, the cases received by Patient Relations Officers (PRO) are categorized into Complaints, Feedback, Request for Assistance / Enquiries. There was no systematic assessment on the risk or severity of the cases. The new classification provides a guideline which helps PRO assess the risk and seriousness of the cases and facilitate prompt and appropriate actions in different trajectories. The introduction of this mechanism has greatly reduced the risk for complains to be escalated to a higher level.

Objectives

1. To establish a mechanism to manage patient feedback and complaints so that their grievances could be managed in a timely and effective manner; 2. To enhance communication with the patient / family concerned by adopting an organized approach in the process of complaint management; 3. To equip PRO with clear guidelines and skills to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness in daily operation.

Methodology

Under the new classification, three categories have been introduced: Green Cases: Enquiry / Request for Assistance Yellow Cases: General Feedback / Complaints Red Cases: Serious Complaints / Patient Safety Incidents
Classification criteria: Nature of incident / major allegation (considered as priority in assessing the seriousness of the case) Source Client' s intention Client' s level of dissatisfaction displayed With such classification, PROs are now having systematic guidelines to proceed with necessary actions. Awareness of the severity of the cases helps them prioritise their daily operation Heightened awareness is raised to "Red Cases" which triggers a multiple pronged approach to minimize the impact and chance for the case to be escalated to a higher level. The PR Team conducts regular review meetings on all red cases occurred in previous 3 months. Key areas of concern and improvement are identified and reviewed. Recommendations will also be sent to departments for service improvement.

Result

Results: With the new initiative, the number of cases appeal to the Public Complaints Committee (PCC) has been drastically dropped. There were 16 appeal cases out of 55 complaints (29%) from April to September 2011 but only 7 out of 185 (3.8%) in the same period of the following year. The rate of case escalation to PCC has dropped by 6 times. Conclusions: A stratified 5 pronged approach to complaint management has provided an effective means to handle patients' grievances. Better response to the patient feedback to our service facilitates the hospital to maintain harmonious relationship with the members of the public.