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Patient Satisfaction at the Sadler Health Center Corporation

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Abstract

Through a partnership between the Sadler Health Center Corporation (Sadler) and Dickinson College, a patient satisfaction survey was developed and implemented to evaluate services offered at Sadler. Students and staff collaborated to administer the anonymous patient satisfaction survey in the Sadler waiting room over the course of five days in November of 2010. Survey results indicate high overall patient satisfaction with services at the center and an increased demand for dental services and appointment accessibility. The results of this survey will be used by Sadler to determine areas of improvement and necessary future changes.

Patient Satisfaction at the Sadler Health Center Corporation

Sadler provides medical and dental services to residents of Cumberland, Perry, and Adams County in Pennsylvania. Many of these residents are underprivileged and under-insured, and rely solely on Sadler for healthcare and health services. The health center is able to accommodate such patients and provides free and reduced care by means of a sliding fee scale. Sadler's mission is to provide "seamless, holistic, quality medical, dental and behavioral health services and education" to the community ("Sadler Health Center Corporation," accessed December 12, 2010). In order to be successful in this endeavor it is necessary for Sadler to be aware of how satisfied their patients are with the care they provide.

This project seeks to assess patient satisfaction with the services provided by Sadler by conducting anonymous handout surveys. The data collected in this project will provide Sadler with a comprehensive understanding of the services they deliver, in addition to assisting them in adapting to the changing needs of their patients. Similarly, healthcare facilities use data from satisfaction surveys to objectively assess themselves, identify and track quality improvement initiatives, and to meet requirements of accrediting agencies (Gribble and Haupt 2005). Such information is crucial to the success of clinics like Sadler, a clinic that provide services to a particularly demanding population that relies solely on their services. By administering patient satisfaction surveys, patients are given a voice and a participatory role in their healthcare experience. This is supported by a study conducted by Beach et al. (2005), that found that quality of healthcare was greatly improved when patients were treated with respect and involved in the decision making process. In particular, we hoped to gain information about how patients felt about their quality and availability of medical or dental care, as well as their interactions with healthcare providers.

General Methods

Subjects

The subjects in this study consisted of 143 patients, whose responses were gained through convenience sampling. Respondents were administered surveys following a completed medical or dental appointment.

Procedure

The survey was created to emulate aspects of the generic survey forms previously used by Sadler, as well as combining segments of a previous study conducted by Dickinson College in 2007 and HRSA's recommended survey format. The survey was worded in a way that was intended to be sensitive to the varying abilities of the targeted population. Patients received a survey tailored to the services they utilized during their appointment: there was a specific survey for either medical or dental appointments. The survey consisted of questions regarding satisfaction with patients' most recent appointment, included a checklist of services used, as well as a section for additional comments. The surveys were administered in the waiting room of the clinic by 11 student volunteers, and were assisted by the Sadler staff. Patients were asked to anonymously fill out a survey on site following their medical or dental appointment. After completion of the survey each patient was entered into a drawing to win a \$100 Wal-Mart gift card.

Data

The surveys were collected from 143 participants, however, not all sections of the surveys were completed. The portions that were incomplete were incorporated in the analysis, however, they were labeled as missing data. SPSS™ was used to analyze and organize the data, and was used to generate graphs and tables.

Results

Survey Demographics

The gender of the Sadler survey population was not balanced with females constituting 64 % of respondents who supplied their gender while 27% of the participants were males (Fig. 1).

Approximately 43% of the population was between the ages of forty and sixty years of age, 29% between nineteen and forty, 18% between sixty-one and eighty-one and 8% eighteen years or younger, and 12% did not provide their age (Fig 2.). About 78% of the patients had a medical appointment and 22% of patients had a dental appointment (Fig 3). Approximately 57% of the patients had their appointment in the morning, while 32% percent had their appointment in the afternoon (Fig 4.).

Patient Relationship to Sadler

Approximately 82% of the participants answered yes when asked if it was their first time visiting Sadler, 8% answered no, and 10% did not provide any information (Fig. 5). When asked whether Sadler was their primary source of health care, 71% of patients responded yes, 16% answered no, and 13% did not respond (Fig. 6).

Services Used

Of the six services offered at Sadler, 80.4% of patients had used medical services, 55.9% used dental services, 15.4% used the Healthy Rx program, 10.5% were in the tobacco cessation program, 4.9% had gone to health education sessions, and 2.1% had been involved in the nurse family partnership program (Fig. 7).

Accessibility

When asked if it was easy to schedule an appointment, 81.8% of patients responded very true, 16.1% responded somewhat true, 1.4% responded not true, and 0.7% were unsure (Fig. 8).

When asked if it was easy to get to Sadler, 81.1% of patients responded very true, 14.7% responded somewhat true, 2.8% responded not true, and 0.7% were unsure of how to respond to the statement (Fig. 9). Approximately 50% of respondents were aware of how to file a complaint, if necessary, 39% did not know how to file a complaint, and 11% did not answer (Fig. 10).

Staff Services

When questioned if receptionists are courteous 94% of patients responded very true, 5.6% answered somewhat true, and 0.7% answered not true (Fig. 11). About 94% of patients responded very true, 4.2% answered somewhat true, and 1.4% answered not true to the statement concerning the helpfulness of receptionists (Fig. 12). With regard to medical and dental assistants, 97.2% of patients responded very true to the courteousness of assistants (Fig. 13). Approximately 97.9% participants responded very true, 1.4% responded somewhat true, and 0.7% responded not true towards the sentence that stated that the provider treated the patient with respect (Fig. 14). In terms of the statement, I understood my provider, 94.4% of the patients answered very true, 4.2% answered somewhat true, and 1.4% responded not true (Fig. 15). When asked if a provider answered their questions 92.3% of patients answered very true, 4.9% responded somewhat true, 1.4% answered not true, and 1.4% were unsure of their response (Fig. 16). Towards the statement, I trust my provider's ability, 83.9% of patients responded very true, 12.6% answered somewhat true, 1.4% responded not true, and 2.1% were unsure of their responses (Fig. 17).

Preventative Measures

Approximately 88% of patients responded very true, 9.2% answered somewhat true, 4.4% responded not true, and 1.4% were unsure towards the statement, I know what to do to get better

(Fig. 18). Towards the statement, I learned healthy habits at Sadler, 71.6% of participants responded very true, 22% responded somewhat true, 5% answered not true, and 1.4% were unsure of their answers (Fig. 19).

Overall Patient Satisfaction

To the statement, I would recommend this provider, about 88% of patients answered very true, 9.9% responded somewhat true, 0.07% answered not true and were unsure of their answer (Fig. 20). In regards to the statement, I am happy that I can go to Sadler if I get sick, 88.7% of patients answered very true, 9.2% answered somewhat true, and 2.1% were unsure of their answers (Fig. 21).

Patient Comments

Only 65 comments were provided by the participants. Of those comments, 80% were positive, 14% were negative, and 6% were suggestions for improvement (Fig. 22).

Discussion

Though the gender of the survey is skewed with twice as many females as there were males, the general demographics seem to be on par with the constituency of Sadler. More than two thirds of patients indicated that their visit during the day of the survey was not their first and that Sadler was their primary source of health care (Fig. 5-6). This suggests that patients possess a strong relationship to Sadler. As expected, the two services most heavily used by patients were medical and dental services (Fig. 7). Given this distribution, it was fascinating to see that five of the thirteen negative comments and suggestions offered by patients were concerned with difficulty attaining dental service (Fig 22). This is a large frequency given that 55.9% of the survey constituency uses dental services and only 22% of respondents were dental patients at the time of the survey's distribution.

On accessibility, appointment scheduling and transportation to Sadler received high marks with slightly more than 80% percent of patients reporting it was easy to make an appointment and to travel to Sadler (Fig. 9-10). This is a high percentage given the geographical distribution of the Sadler patient base, suggesting that most patients have access to a car or live in the nearby vicinity. There is room for significant improvement on patient education concerning complaint filing since only fifty percent of respondents knew how to file a complaint, if necessary. Improving access to this resource may ease patient comfort in reporting concerns with the facilities or staff at Sadler (Fig. 10).

Support staff services and provider services received very high marks with greater than 90% of patients responding very true to six of seven statements evaluating provider and support staff performance (Fig. 11-17). About 16% of patients, however, responded below very true to a statement regarding their trust in their provider; interestingly enough, 26% and 13% of all males and all females, respectively, fell into this category (Fig. 17). This suggests that male patients tend to be less trusting of their providers than females. Overall patient satisfaction was very high with more than 88% of patients stating they would go as far as recommending their provider to a friend (Fig. 20). Taken together, this data suggests that patients are extremely satisfied with the quality services available to them at Sadler.

This study possesses a few possible limitations. One such limitation may be that each patient may have interpreted the questions in a slightly different way leading to biased results. Another possible limitation is the length of the study. Because the study was only conducted over the course of five days, less than one percent of the patient population was able to be reached. Perhaps this study can be conducted again on a more long-term basis in order to reach more patients and hopefully obtain results that accurately reflect the opinions of the entire patient

population. It is also possible that the method of sampling used in this study contributed to bias in the results. Because patients were sampled on a convenience basis, it is possible that only patients who had either strongly positive or strongly negative opinions about Sadler chose to participate in the study. Perhaps this study could be conducted again using some sort of random sampling technique to obtain participants. Another possible limitation of this study is the method of survey delivery. It is known that participants are more likely to provide positive answers on a survey that is given in person than one that they can mail back (Gribble, 2005). Perhaps this study can be conducted again with the option of a take home survey. While it is possible that less people would fill out the survey, it also likely that the results would more accurately reflect the opinions of the patients. One final limitation is that while patients were asked to fill out the surveys based only on that days visit, it is likely that previous experiences still influenced their responses. This is evidenced by the fact that many of the comments from the patients referenced past experiences at Sadler. It could be helpful to conduct a future study that included a section inquiring about previous visits to Sadler in an attempt to separate the experiences and obtain more accurate survey results.

References

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Figures

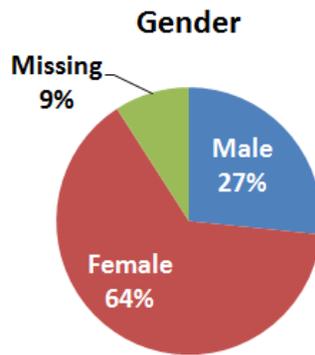


Figure 1. Gender breakdown of survey participants. Twice as many females for every male, responded.

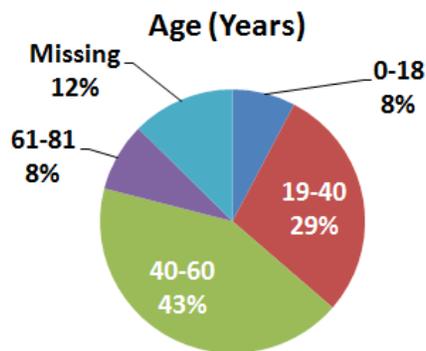


Figure 2. Age breakdown of survey participants. Of the patients who participated, most were between the ages of 40-60 or 19-40.

Patient Type

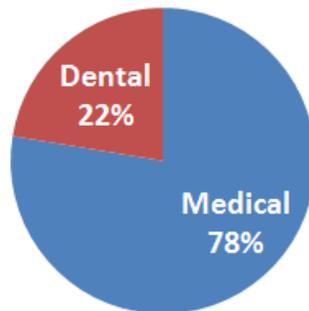


Figure 3. Breakdown of administered survey type. There were three times more patients that had a medical appointment than dental patients.

Appointment Time

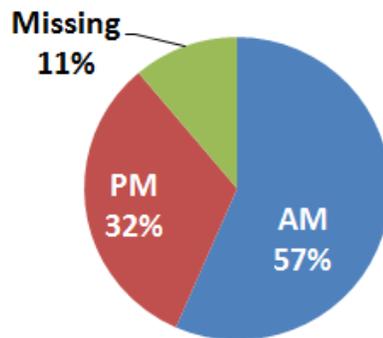


Figure 4. Breakdown of appointment time at time of survey. More than 50% of the participants had an appointment in the morning.

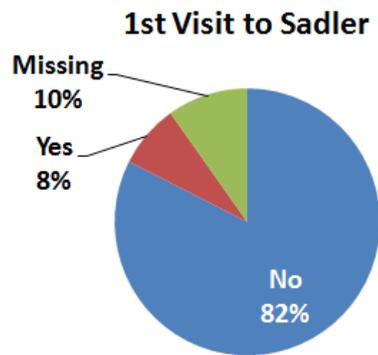


Figure 5. Patients' first visit to Sadler. More than three fourths of the patients had visited Sadler before.

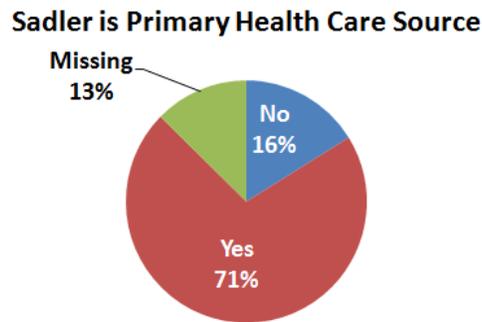


Figure 6. Sadler is the Primary Health Care Source. More than two thirds of the patients considered Sadler their primary health care source.

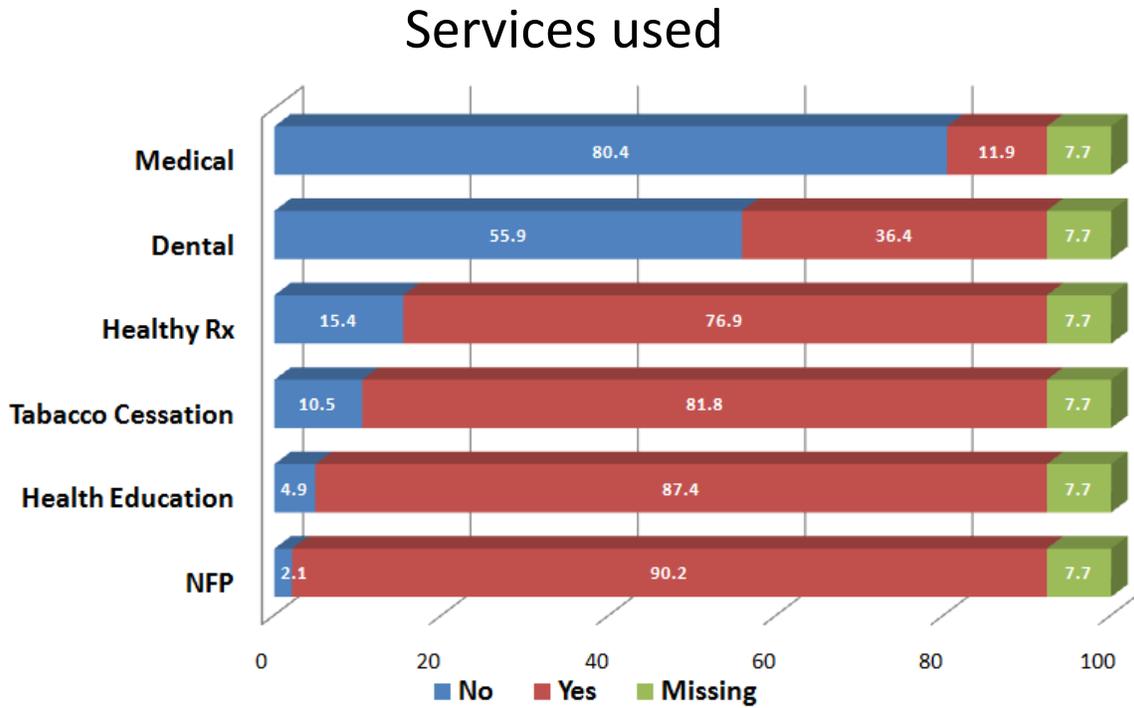


Figure 7. Services Used. Of the six services provided, medical and dental services are the most heavily used.

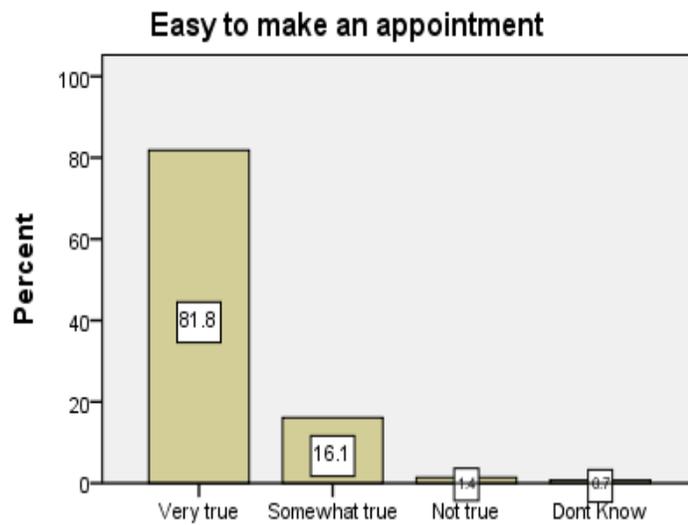


Figure 8. Ease of scheduling an appointment. More than three fourths of the patients answered very true when asked if it was easy to make an appointment.

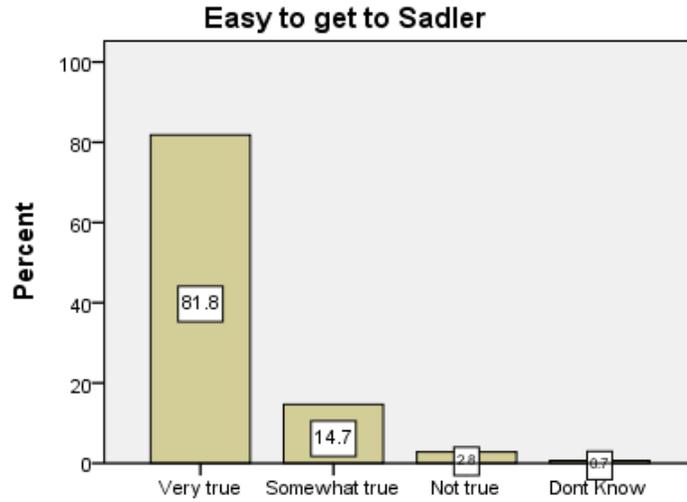


Figure 9. Ease of transportation. More than three fourths of patients answered very true when asked if it was easy to get Sadler.

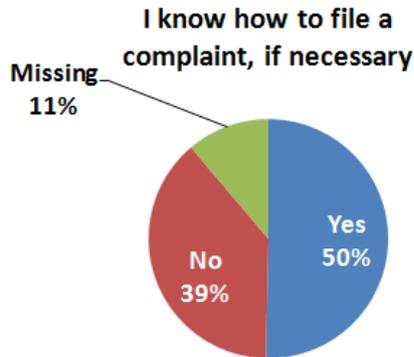


Figure 10. Ease of filing a complaint. Approximately half of the patients stated they knew how to file a complaint, if necessary.

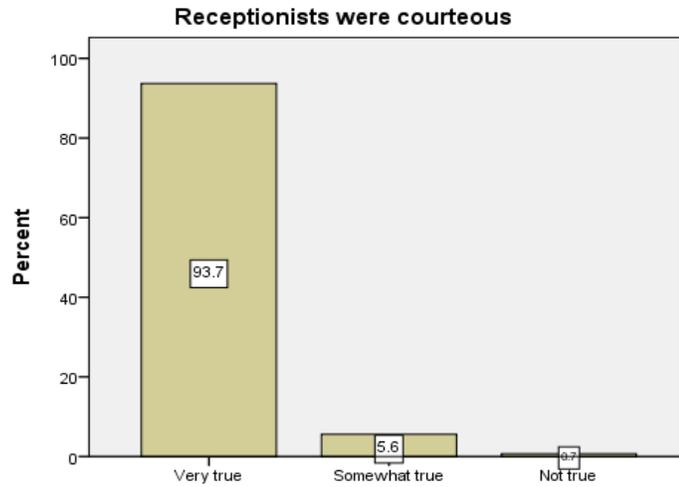


Figure 11. Attitudes of receptionists. More than 90% of the receptionists thought that the receptionists were courteous.

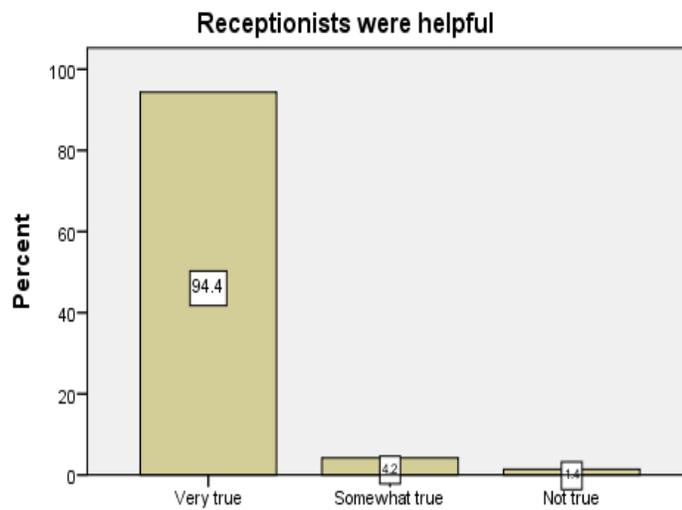


Figure 12. Service by receptionists. More than 90% of the patients thought that the receptionists were helpful.

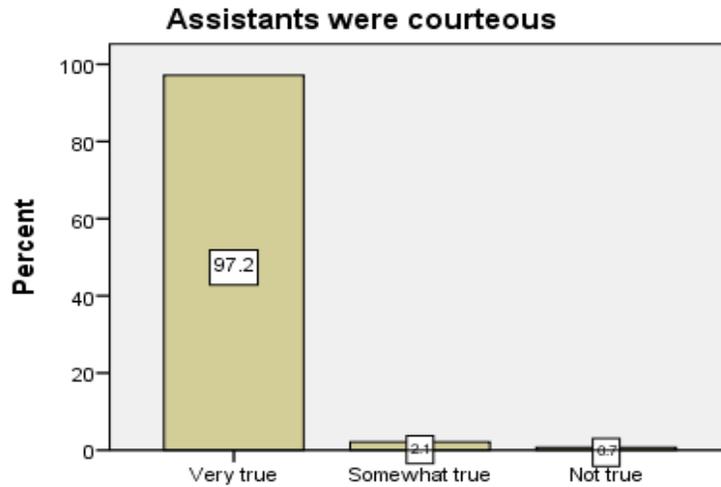


Figure 13. Attitudes of medical and dental assistants. More than 90% of the patients thought that assistants were courteous.

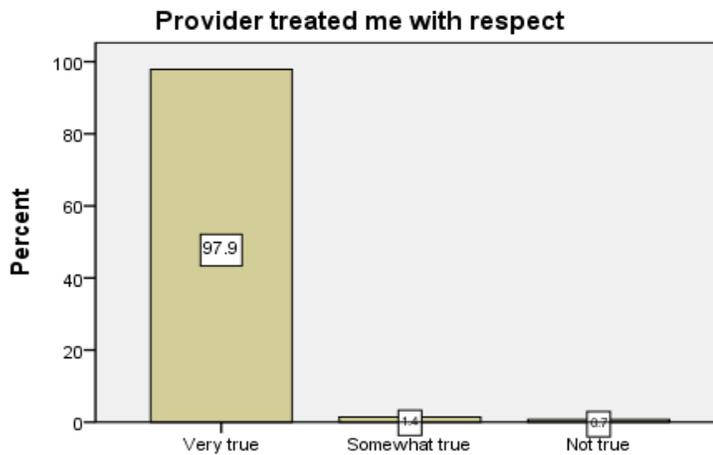


Figure 14. Attitudes of providers. More than 90% of participants believed that their provider treated them with respect.

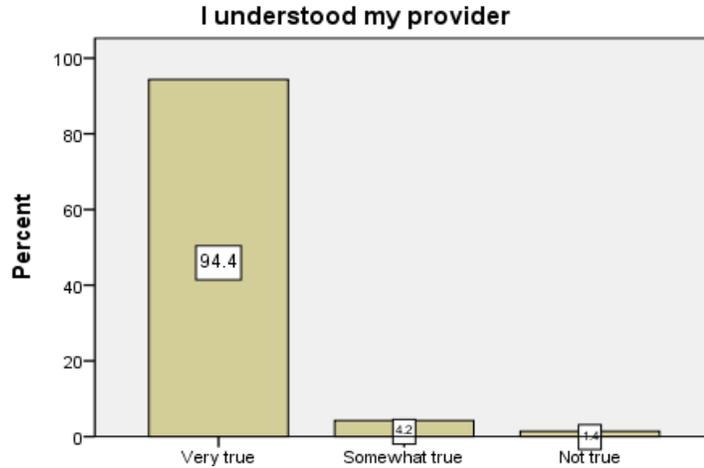


Figure 15. Patient understanding of providers. More than 90% of the patients understood their provider.

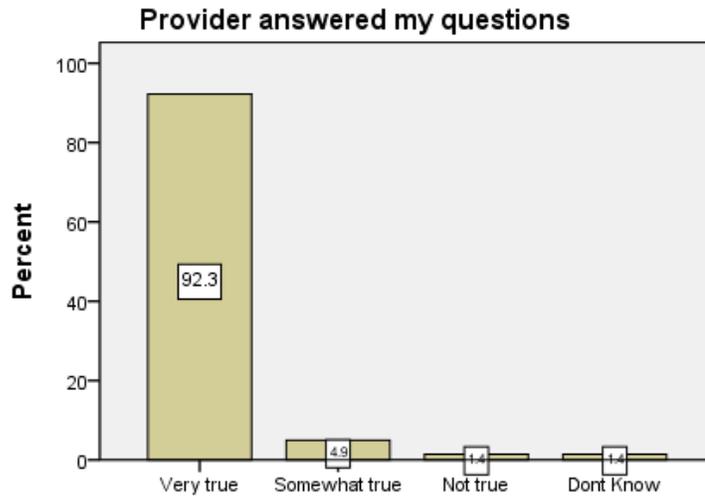


Figure 16. Patient perception of providers' ability to answer their question. More than three fourths of the participants felt that their provider answered their questions.

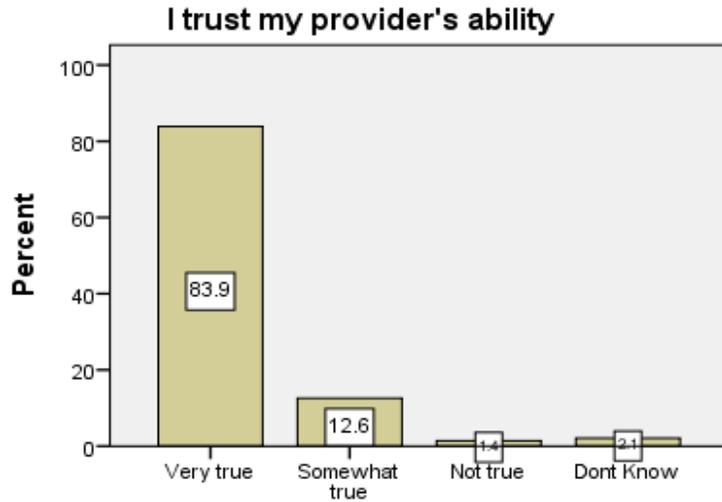


Figure 17. Patient perception of providers' general abilities. More than three fourths of the participants felt that their provider answered their questions.

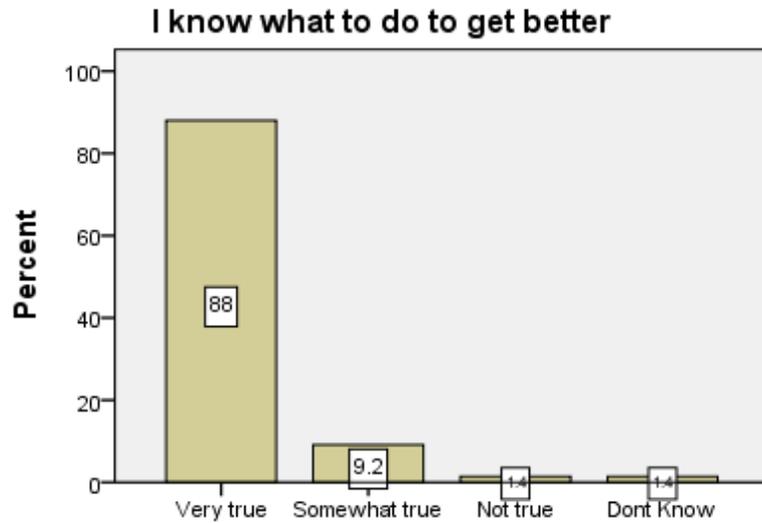


Figure 18. Preventative measures. More than three fourths of the patients knew what to do to get better.

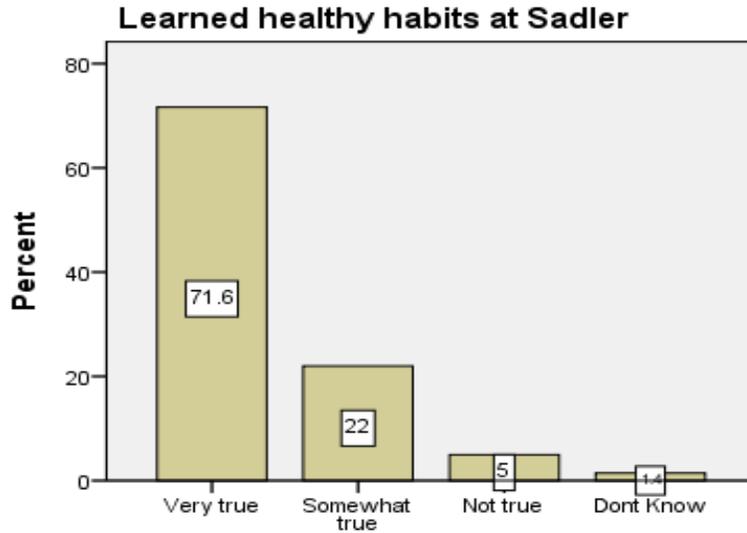


Figure 19. Healthy habits. More than two thirds of the patients learned healthy habits at Sadler.

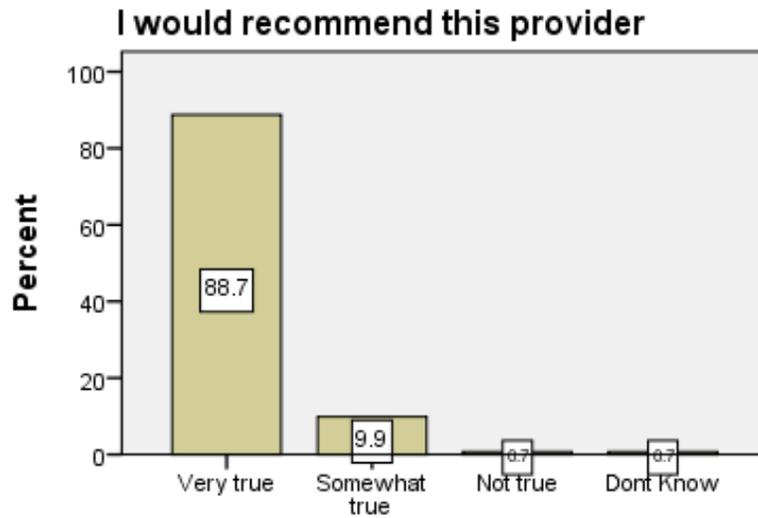


Figure 20. Recommendation of provider services. More than three fourths of patients would recommend their provider.

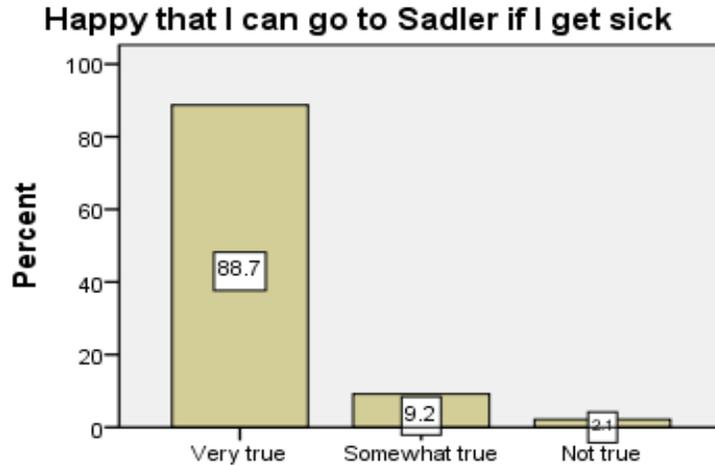


Figure 21. Overall Satisfaction with Sadler. More than three fourths of the patients are happy to go to Sadler if they get sick.

Patient Comments

<p>Positive (52) 80%</p>	<p>They respect and privacy of patients, medical concerns to remain private and secure. Thank you.</p> <p>Thanks for all you do! I am very happy coming here. A wonderful place when insurance is an issue, I think this is a blessing to know I have someplace to go you never know what or when you need medical care, thanks for being available.</p> <p>Dr. XXXX is the best! Keep up the good service.</p> <p>I was told about sadler by 4 different areas of my life. All are true by m observation and I thank them, you and most of all God for guiding me here.</p> <p>The dental staff was excellent, very thorough, friendly, compassionate. Definitely a breath of fresh air after disappointing dental services in the past</p> <p>They act funny when they want to.</p> <p>The wait time to get an appointment is extremely long, however the kind of treatment you get is worth it.</p>			
<p>Negative (9) 14%</p>	<p>They need to get better with long waits on the phone and in waiting room</p> <p>Dental, everyone is courteous and friendly. Medical, cranky, probably Dr. XXXX is demeaning and does not listen.</p> <p>Sometime it takes 6 weeks to see your doctor. If you don't call for a sick appointment.</p> <p>Had to wait a while today but I usually don't</p> <p>Hard to get a sick appt that day if you call after 8AM.</p> <p>Hard to get an appointment set up for dental work, take up 2-3 months</p> <p>Hard to get an appointment for dental work. Almost impossible. They tell you to call the start of the month and when you do, there is no appointment available.</p>			
<p>Suggestions (4) 6%</p>	<p>Need to make last minute unscheduled appointments more available when you call in sick and need to see someone asap.</p> <p>Awesome, good job, thank you! Some how easier to get dental appointments?</p> <p>We need larger dentist wing with more dentists</p> <p>When sending out dental appointment cards they need to have space available to actually see the patient. I have been calling trying to get a dental appointment since they send me the card and I can't get in for an appointment. They are always full.</p>			

Figure 22. Patient Comments. More than three fourths of the comments provided by the patients were positive.