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Improving Healthcare Service Delivery and Patient Satisfaction: A Comprehensive Review of Patient-Centered Strategies and Organizational Practices

Mohammed Faris Abdullah Almansour[1], Waleed Hamad Saleh Alyami[2], Mohammed Hussain Saleh Alyami[3], Abdullah Saad Abdullah Alzahouf[4], Hassan Mohammed Alfaraj[5], Abdullah Saleh A Alrabiai[6], Salem Manasar Mansour Haraid[7], Faleh marzoog Jaber Alsaleh[8], Marzooq Hadi Nasser Algree[9]

Abstract

Background: Improving healthcare service delivery requires attention to both organizational performance and patients' needs, preferences, and expectations. Patient satisfaction provides an important perspective on care, while patient experience identifies specific interactions and processes that may require improvement. Objective: To critically examine patient-centered strategies and organizational practices intended to improve healthcare service delivery and patient satisfaction across hospital and outpatient settings. Methods: A structured narrative review is planned using PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, and Web of Science. Searches will cover publications from January 2014 to the final search date, supplemented by relevant foundational sources. Eligible studies will examine service improvement strategies and report patient satisfaction or experience outcomes. Evidence will undergo critical appraisal and thematic synthesis. Findings: The planned synthesis will examine communication, shared decision-making, access, waiting times, care coordination, workforce practices, digital services, and patient feedback. It will compare reported outcomes, methodological limitations, implementation requirements, and differences across settings and patient groups. Particular attention will address whether observed improvements reflect intervention effects or associations. Conclusion: This review will provide an evidence-informed assessment of service improvement approaches and their organizational requirements. Recommendations will reflect the strength of available evidence, with patient satisfaction considered alongside experience, safety, effectiveness, and equitable access to care.

Keywords: *Patient Satisfaction, Patient-Centered Strategies, Organizational Practices.*

Introduction

Improving healthcare service delivery requires attention to how patients access care, interact with professionals, and move between services. Clinical expertise remains essential, but patients also need timely appointments, understandable information, respectful treatment, and coordinated support. These aspects of care influence how patients experience healthcare and evaluate its

[1] New Najran General Hospital (Al-Shurfa), Saudi Arabia, Email: mfalmansour@moh.gov.sa
[2] West Najran Hospital, Saudi Arabia, Email: wahalyami@moh.gov.sa
[3] West Najran Hospital, Saudi Arabia, Email: malyami31@moh.gov.sa
[4] West Najran Maternity and Children's Hospital, Najran, Saudi Arabia, Email: asalzahuf@moh.gov.sa
[5] King Khalid Hospital, Saudi Arabia, Email: Hamalfaraj@moh.gov.sa
[6] West Najran Maternity and Children's Hospital, Najran, Saudi Arabia, Email: aalrabiai@moh.gov.sa
[7] Khubash General Hospital, Saudi Arabia, Email: Alhorid@gmail.com
[8] Habuna General Hospital in Najran, Saudi Arabia, Email: Falsoleeh@moh.gov.sa
[9] Habuna General Hospital in Najran, Saudi Arabia, Email: malgaree@moh.gov.sa

quality. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) identifies integrated, people-centered services as an important direction for health system reform, emphasizing that care should respond to people's needs and preferences across the continuum of services. Improving service delivery therefore involves both clinical processes and the organizational arrangements that support them.

Patient satisfaction provides an important perspective on healthcare performance, although it should be distinguished from patient experience. Satisfaction reflects patients' evaluation of care in relation to their expectations, whereas experience concerns what occurred during care, such as whether professionals explained treatment clearly or provided timely assistance. Patients receiving similar services may report different levels of satisfaction because their expectations differ. Consequently, satisfaction scores alone may not identify the processes responsible for a positive or negative evaluation. Assessing satisfaction alongside specific experience measures offers a more informative basis for improvement (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ], 2024).

Patient-centered care provides a foundation for addressing these service dimensions. It emphasizes respect for individual values, clear communication, participation in decisions, and responsiveness to personal circumstances. Santana et al. (2018) developed a conceptual framework that connects the structures, processes, and outcomes needed to support person-centered care. Their framework illustrates that implementation extends beyond individual professional behavior to include organizational culture, supportive environments, and appropriate measurement. From this perspective, improving patient satisfaction requires examining how healthcare organizations enable staff to provide care that reflects patients' needs, rather than relying only on interpersonal skills or isolated service initiatives.

Organizational practices are therefore central to the review of service improvement. Leadership, workforce development, service design, information exchange, and coordination provide the conditions within which patient-centered interactions occur. The WHO framework identifies engagement, governance, reorientation of care, coordination, and an enabling environment as complementary areas for action (WHO, 2016). This approach supports examining service improvement across the patient journey, including appointment booking, consultation, referral, discharge, and follow-up. It also encourages consideration of whether improvements are accessible to patients with different language needs, disabilities, resources, and levels of support.

Patient involvement in service planning offers another important perspective. Collecting feedback can identify problems, but meaningful engagement also involves patients in deciding how services should change. Bombard et al. (2018) examined patient involvement in healthcare improvement and identified outcomes ranging from educational materials and planning documents to changes in services and governance. Their review also highlighted the importance of leadership and organizational context, while noting uncertainty about whether reported changes consistently translated into improved care quality. These findings support a critical examination of how patient feedback is converted into action and how the effects of that action are evaluated.

A comprehensive review can bring these patient-centered and organizational perspectives together while examining the strength and limitations of the evidence. Particular attention is

needed to differences between healthcare settings, outcome instruments, intervention designs, and implementation conditions. Patient satisfaction should also be considered alongside experience, safety, and effectiveness to provide a balanced assessment of service quality (AHRQ, 2024). Accordingly, this review aims to critically synthesize evidence on patient-centered strategies and organizational practices intended to improve healthcare service delivery and patient satisfaction. It will examine communication, access, responsiveness, coordination, workforce practices, digital support, and feedback-driven improvement, identifying implications for healthcare management and priorities for further research.

Methods

Review Design

This study will use a structured narrative review to examine patient-centered strategies and organizational practices intended to improve healthcare service delivery and patient satisfaction. This design will allow integration of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods evidence across hospital and outpatient settings. A transparent search and selection process will support a critical thematic synthesis. Patient satisfaction and patient experience will be treated as related but distinct outcomes.

Search Strategy

Literature searches will be conducted in PubMed/MEDLINE, CINAHL, Scopus, and Web of Science. The search period will extend from January 2014 to the actual final search date. Earlier foundational publications will be considered separately when needed to explain key concepts. Relevant World Health Organization and national health authority documents will provide policy context.

Search terms will combine “patient satisfaction,” “patient experience,” “healthcare service delivery,” “patient-centered care,” “quality improvement,” and “organizational practices.” Additional searches will address communication, shared decision-making, waiting times, access, care coordination, workforce practices, digital services, and patient feedback. Controlled vocabulary and alternative spellings will be adapted to each database. Reference lists of eligible articles and relevant reviews will be examined for additional studies. Full search strategies and search dates will be documented in supplementary material.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible studies will involve adults receiving hospital or outpatient care and examine a patient-centered strategy or organizational practice relevant to service improvement. Studies must report patient satisfaction or experience outcomes, or qualitative findings concerning these outcomes. Service measures, such as waiting time and referral completion, will be extracted when available.

Randomized trials, quasi-experimental studies, observational studies, qualitative research, and mixed-methods studies published in English will be considered. Editorials, opinion articles, conference abstracts without sufficient methodological information, and studies addressing clinical treatments without a service delivery component will be excluded. Previous reviews will

inform background and reference searching rather than contribute duplicate outcome evidence.

Study Selection and Data Extraction

Retrieved records will be imported into reference-management software and duplicates removed. Two reviewers will independently assess titles and abstracts, followed by full-text assessment of potentially eligible publications. Disagreements will be resolved through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer. Reasons for full-text exclusion will be recorded.

A standardized extraction form will capture publication details, country, setting, study design, sample characteristics, intervention components, comparator, implementation duration, outcome instruments, reported findings, and methodological limitations. One reviewer will extract data and a second will verify accuracy. Implementation barriers, resource requirements, and equity-related findings will also be recorded.

Critical Appraisal and Synthesis

Studies will be appraised using tools appropriate to their research designs. Appraisal will consider selection bias, confounding, measurement validity, completeness of reporting, and the credibility of qualitative interpretations. Methodological limitations will inform the weight assigned to findings.

Evidence will be organized into themes covering communication, access, coordination, workforce practices, digital support, and feedback-driven improvement. Intervention effects will be distinguished from observational associations and qualitative explanations. Differences between settings, populations, instruments, and follow-up periods will be examined. Statistical pooling is not planned because substantial methodological and clinical variation is anticipated. Recommendations will reflect evidence strength, consistency, and applicability.

Findings

Communication is a central component of patient-centered service delivery because it determines whether patients understand their condition, treatment options, and next steps. AHRQ (2024) identifies communication, access to information, respect, and involvement in decisions as important dimensions of patient experience. These dimensions provide more specific information for service improvement than an overall satisfaction score. For example, knowing that patients received unclear discharge explanations identifies a practical problem that an overall rating may conceal.

Evidence on shared decision-making supports improvements in decision quality, although these outcomes should not be confused with general satisfaction. Stacey et al. (2024) found that patient decision aids improved knowledge, accurate understanding of risks, and participation in decisions. They also reduced decisional conflict related to feeling uninformed or uncertain about personal values. These findings support providing understandable information and opportunities to discuss preferences, but they do not establish that every decision aid improves satisfaction with the entire healthcare service.

The practical implication is to evaluate communication at the level where change occurs. Relevant measures include patients' understanding, perceived involvement, and whether questions were answered. Communication initiatives should also account for language, health literacy, and patients' preferred level of participation. A standardized explanation may improve consistency, but its effectiveness depends on whether staff adapt it to individual needs.

Access involves more than obtaining an appointment quickly. Patients must be able to navigate booking systems, explain their needs, receive an appropriate response, and reach the right professional. In a qualitative study involving 70 interviews with patients, carers, and staff, Sinnott et al. (2026) described access as shaped by organizational arrangements and relationships. Participants valued continuity and interactions that helped services understand their circumstances. The findings also highlighted potential difficulties when access increasingly depends on patients completing tasks through digital systems.

This evidence suggests that access initiatives should be assessed through several dimensions rather than a single waiting-time indicator. Faster booking may offer limited benefit when patients cannot obtain suitable appointments or must repeat their concerns to different staff. Conversely, a service that provides clear information and appropriate continuity may meet patients' needs even when immediate appointments are unavailable.

A useful analytical distinction is between appointment delay, waiting within the facility, and the time required to complete the care pathway. These intervals represent different organizational problems. Their relationship with satisfaction should be examined separately, alongside patients' perceptions of urgency and convenience. Because qualitative findings explain experiences rather than estimate intervention effects, they inform service design but cannot establish how much a particular scheduling change will improve satisfaction.

Coordination becomes particularly important when patients receive care from multiple professionals or services. Fragmentation can create uncertainty about responsibilities, treatment plans, and follow-up. The WHO (2016) framework identifies coordination within and across services as a core element of integrated, people-centered care. This provides a policy rationale for examining referral pathways, discharge processes, and continuity across settings, although the framework itself is not evidence of intervention effectiveness.

The 3D trial provides an empirical example of the distinction between patient-centered outcomes and broader health outcomes. Salisbury et al. (2018) evaluated a coordinated approach for patients with multimorbidity, incorporating comprehensive reviews and attention to patients' priorities. The intervention improved measures of patient-centered care, including satisfaction, but did not improve the primary outcome of health-related quality of life. This finding indicates that patients may experience care as more responsive without a corresponding improvement in every clinical or functional outcome.

For this review, coordination should therefore be evaluated through both process measures and patient reports. Relevant indicators include whether patients understood their care plan, experienced services as joined up, and received expected follow-up. Evidence from multimorbidity management should also be interpreted within its primary care context rather than

assumed to apply directly to all hospital services.

Table 1. Selected evidence informing the thematic synthesis

Source	Evidence type	Relevant finding	Interpretation boundary
Stacey et al. (2024)	Systematic review of decision aids	Improved knowledge, risk understanding, and participation	Decision quality differs from overall service satisfaction
Sinnott et al. (2024)	Qualitative study	Access depended on navigation, relationships, and organizational arrangements	Explains experiences; does not estimate intervention effects
Salisbury et al. (2018)	Cluster-randomized trial	Improved patient-centered care and satisfaction	No improvement in the primary quality-of-life outcome
Danila et al. (2022)	Randomized noninferiority trial	Telephone satisfaction was noninferior to video satisfaction	Findings concern selected patients receiving established follow-up
Lawton et al. (2017)	Cluster-randomized trial	Patient feedback intervention showed no significant overall safety benefit	Safety outcomes do not directly establish satisfaction effects

Sources: Stacey et al. (2024), Sinnott et al. (2026), Salisbury et al. (2018), Danila et al. (2022), and Lawton et al. (2017).

Patient-centered care depends on organizational conditions as well as individual professional behavior. Santana et al. (2018) connect the structures supporting care with the processes through which it is delivered and the outcomes used to assess performance. Their conceptual framework emphasizes organizational culture, staff support, communication, and measurement. It offers a useful way to examine whether healthcare organizations provide the conditions necessary for patient-centered practice. However, a conceptual framework does not establish the effectiveness of specific staffing or training interventions.

Leadership and staff participation also influence whether improvement activities progress beyond planning. Bombard et al. (2018) identified leadership action and a receptive organizational context among the factors supporting patient engagement in service redesign. Their findings suggest that patient involvement must be connected to decision-making structures if it is to influence services.

The resulting organizational implication is to assess both the intervention and its implementation. A communication program, for example, requires examination of staff participation, actual use, and maintenance over time. Training completion alone does not show that patients experienced better communication. Similarly, satisfaction should not be attributed to staffing changes without considering differences in patient populations, workload, and concurrent service developments.

Digital tools provide alternative ways to access appointments, information, and consultations.

Their value should be assessed according to patient needs and service suitability rather than technological sophistication alone. Danila et al. (2022) compared telephone and video consultations in a randomized noninferiority trial involving established patients who were older or had public insurance. Satisfaction with telephone consultations was noninferior to satisfaction with video consultations under the trial's prespecified margin. Both groups reported high satisfaction.

The study supports considering telephone consultations as a potentially acceptable option for some follow-up services. However, it does not demonstrate equivalence in clinical quality, suitability for new diagnoses, or effectiveness among patients without the trial's eligibility characteristics. Participants were established patients and had videoconferencing capability, limiting conclusions about people entirely excluded from digital services.

An evidence-informed implication is to preserve appropriate choice between service channels. Evaluation should examine failed connections, usability, communication quality, and whether patients receive necessary subsequent care. Comparisons should also consider who uses each channel. High satisfaction among successful digital users may overlook patients who could not access the service.

Patient feedback can identify service problems, but collecting information does not itself establish that improvement has occurred. Bombard et al. (2018) found that patient engagement contributed to educational resources, planning, service changes, and governance. More substantial involvement, including partnership and co-design, was associated with different outputs from consultation alone. Nevertheless, the review identified uncertainty about whether these outputs consistently translated into improved care quality.

The PRASE trial illustrates this implementation challenge. Lawton et al. (2017) evaluated patient safety feedback followed by multidisciplinary action planning across 33 hospital wards. The intervention produced no significant overall effect on the measured safety outcomes at six or twelve months. Implementation of action plans was limited, and exploratory findings concerning greater adherence did not overturn the main result.

Although PRASE addressed safety rather than satisfaction directly, it demonstrates why feedback collection and subsequent outcomes must be distinguished. A proposed improvement process should include responsibility for reviewing feedback, selecting actions, implementing changes, and reassessing outcomes. These steps represent an organizational interpretation of the evidence, rather than a universally validated intervention.

Table 2. Proposed measures for evaluating service improvement

Domain	Patient-reported measure	Operational or balancing measure
Communication	Clarity of explanations and involvement	Consultation duration and staff workload
Access	Ease of obtaining appropriate care	Appointment delay and unsuccessful bookings
Coordination	Understanding of plans and continuity	Referral completion and follow-up delivery

Workforce practices	Respect and responsiveness	Staffing pressure and implementation adherence
Digital services	Usability and consultation satisfaction	Failed connections and subsequent in-person visits
Feedback processes	Perceived response to concerns	Actions completed and outcomes reassessed

This table presents author-proposed measurement domains, not validated findings from the planned review.

The selected evidence demonstrates the importance of distinguishing satisfaction, experience, decision quality, safety, and health outcomes. AHRQ (2024) recommends considering patient experience alongside other quality dimensions, while the 3D trial shows that improved patient-centered care can occur without improved quality of life.

The final synthesis should therefore compare strategies according to their measured outcomes and implementation conditions. It should also examine response rates, survey timing, instrument validity, and differences between patient groups. The strongest interpretation is that patient-centered service improvement requires coordinated organizational action and careful evaluation; the available examples do not support a single intervention that reliably improves every outcome across all settings.

Discussion

The evidence discussed in this review suggests that improving healthcare service delivery requires attention to both patient-facing interactions and the organizational arrangements supporting them. Communication, access, coordination, and patient involvement address different aspects of care and should be evaluated together. However, their benefits vary according to setting, implementation, and outcome measurement. The WHO framework supports this integrated perspective by connecting patient engagement with governance, service organization, coordination, and an enabling environment (WHO, 2016). This framework offers direction for improvement, although it does not establish the effectiveness of individual interventions.

One important implication is that patient satisfaction should be interpreted alongside specific experience measures. Satisfaction reflects whether care meets expectations, while experience describes what patients report occurred. An overall satisfaction score may therefore provide limited guidance about the processes requiring change. Questions concerning explanations, responsiveness, and continuity can identify more actionable problems. Healthcare organizations should also avoid interpreting high satisfaction as sufficient evidence of safe or effective care. A balanced assessment combines patient-reported evaluations with clinical and operational measures (AHRQ, 2024).

Communication and shared decision-making illustrate the importance of distinguishing outcomes. Stacey et al. (2024) found that decision aids improved knowledge, risk understanding,

and participation. These benefits support informed involvement, but they should not be treated as proof of improved satisfaction with every aspect of service delivery. Similarly, a patient who understands treatment options may still encounter appointment delays or fragmented follow-up. This suggests that communication interventions should be connected with broader service improvements while retaining measures that accurately reflect their intended effects.

Care coordination provides another example of outcomes that may move independently. Salisbury et al. (2018) reported improvements in patient-centered care and satisfaction following the 3D intervention for multimorbidity, without improvement in the primary quality-of-life outcome. This distinction does not diminish the value of better care experiences; it demonstrates that service responsiveness and health status represent different dimensions of performance. Expectations about intervention benefits should therefore remain specific. Longer follow-up and appropriate clinical measures are needed before concluding that an improvement in experience produces broader health gains.

Implementation is equally important when interpreting patient involvement. Bombard et al. (2018) identified contributions to service design and governance but also uncertainty about subsequent quality improvements. The PRASE trial reinforces this caution: patient feedback and action planning did not produce significant overall improvements in measured safety outcomes, and implementation of action plans was limited (Lawton et al., 2017). Together, these findings suggest that collecting feedback is only one stage of improvement. Organizations need practical authority, staff participation, and follow-through to test whether proposed changes benefit patients.

Digital services should also be assessed according to suitability and patient choice. Danila et al. (2022) found that telephone consultation satisfaction was noninferior to video consultation satisfaction among selected established patients. This finding challenges the assumption that a more technologically advanced channel necessarily provides a better experience. Nevertheless, satisfaction comparisons do not establish equivalent clinical performance or suitability for all consultations. A reasonable organizational implication is to offer appropriate alternatives and monitor unsuccessful access, technical difficulties, and subsequent care requirements alongside satisfaction.

Equity deserves particular attention because apparently efficient services can impose additional demands on patients. Sinnott et al. (2026) highlighted the relational and organizational dimensions of access, including difficulties associated with transferring tasks to patients through digital systems. Improvement should therefore be examined across groups with different language needs, disabilities, and resources. Reporting only average satisfaction can conceal unequal experiences. Qualitative accounts can help explain these differences, although they cannot determine the numerical effectiveness of a proposed intervention.

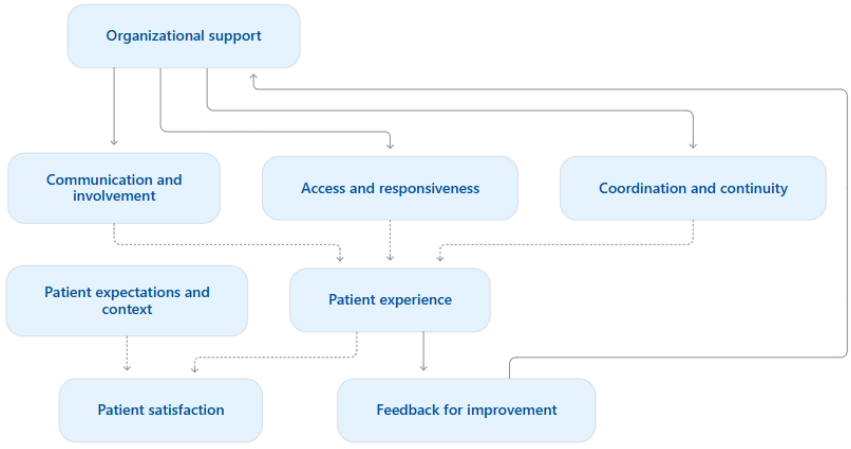


Figure 1. Proposed relationships between organizational practices and patient satisfaction

Dashed arrows represent proposed influences, not established causal effects. Author-developed conceptual figure informed by WHO (2016), Santana et al. (2018), and AHRQ (2025).

Overall, the selected evidence supports evaluating service improvement as a connected organizational process. Future research should specify intervention components, assess implementation, use validated outcome instruments, and examine sustainability and subgroup differences. Comparative studies are particularly needed to establish which combinations of strategies work in particular settings. The final review should distinguish empirical findings from policy frameworks and proposed recommendations, providing conclusions proportionate to the strength and applicability of the evidence.

Practice and Policy Implications

Healthcare organizations should translate patient-centered principles into specific service priorities, responsibilities, and measurable actions. The WHO framework provides a foundation for connecting patient engagement with governance, coordination, and supportive organizational conditions (WHO, 2016). In practice, managers can identify priority problems by examining patient feedback alongside appointment delays, referral completion, and other service indicators. Each improvement initiative should have an accountable lead, a realistic implementation plan, and measures that assess whether patients benefit. These actions are proposed applications of the framework rather than interventions with universally established effects.

Communication improvement should include understandable explanations, opportunities for questions, and participation consistent with patients' preferences. Decision aids may support informed choices, particularly when several reasonable treatment options exist. Stacey et al. (2024) demonstrated benefits for knowledge, risk understanding, and participation, supporting their appropriate use within clinical encounters. Organizations should evaluate these outcomes directly rather than assume that improved decision quality automatically increases overall

satisfaction. Materials should also be accessible to patients with different language and literacy needs.

Service access policies should consider continuity, convenience, and patients' ability to navigate care. Digital booking and remote consultations should be accompanied by appropriate alternatives. Danila et al. (2022) found that telephone consultation satisfaction was noninferior to video satisfaction among selected established patients, suggesting that telephone follow-up can remain a useful option. However, consultation channels should be selected according to clinical suitability and individual circumstances. Monitoring unsuccessful bookings, technical failures, and subsequent care requirements would provide a fuller assessment of digital service performance.

Patient feedback should inform decisions through an explicit process of review, action, and reassessment. Bombard et al. (2018) support involving patients in service design while highlighting uncertainty about subsequent quality gains. Patient advisory groups and co-design activities can therefore complement surveys, provided participation influences decisions. Organizations should communicate what changed and evaluate the outcomes rather than treat feedback collection as evidence of improvement.

At policy level, performance frameworks should distinguish satisfaction from experience and assess both alongside safety, effectiveness, access, and equity (AHRQ, 2024). Comparisons between providers should account for measurement methods and patient characteristics. Policymakers should support validated instruments, transparent reporting, and evaluation of improvement programs. Stratifying results by relevant patient groups can help identify unequal experiences. Funding and accountability arrangements should encourage demonstrable, sustained improvements rather than isolated increases in survey scores.

Conclusion

Improving healthcare service delivery and patient satisfaction requires coordinated attention to patients' needs and the organizational processes that shape care. The evidence discussed supports the value of clear communication, informed participation, appropriate access, continuity, and meaningful patient involvement. However, benefits differ across settings and outcomes, and no single strategy can be assumed to improve every dimension of healthcare quality.

Patient satisfaction should be assessed alongside specific patient experiences, operational performance, safety, and effectiveness. This balanced approach helps organizations identify service problems and determine whether changes produce meaningful benefits. Digital services can offer useful alternatives, but their implementation should reflect clinical suitability, patient preferences, and equitable access. Similarly, collecting patient feedback should lead to accountable action and evaluation rather than remain an isolated measurement activity.

Healthcare leaders should establish clear improvement priorities, support staff participation, and monitor implementation and sustainability. Future research should use robust comparative designs, validated measures, and sufficient follow-up to identify which strategies work best for particular populations and settings. Connecting patient perspectives with organizational responsibility provides a practical foundation for developing more responsive, coordinated, and

equitable healthcare services.

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