

The tick and the talk: do patients' survey responses relate to their narrated experience of primary care consultations?

Patient experience, as measured by questionnaires, is an important component of performance measurement in general practice. We aimed to determine whether responses on surveys accurately reflected their experience of the consultation. Consultations between patients and GPs were video recorded. After the consultation, patients were asked to complete a questionnaire about the GPs' communication skills. Patients (n=53) subsequently took part in a video elicitation interview during which they were shown a video of their consultation and interviewed about their experience and their completion of the questionnaire. Whilst participants were able to raise concerns about doctors' behaviour within the interview, they were reluctant to do so in their questionnaire responses. We identified a number of factors which impacted on how they completed the questionnaire about the consultation. Our findings suggest that patients are inhibited in providing feedback to GPs through a questionnaire. Our results suggest that patient surveys are limited tools for enabling patients to feed back their views about consultations and hence for doctors to improve their practice.