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VHUP Client Survey

Annually more than 23,000 patient visits are made to VHUP. To assess client satisfaction with the services offered, the hospital, during the last four years, has conducted yearly client surveys. The results are used to identify problem areas, determine areas of strength, and to initiate corrections.

The clients surveyed represented 5% of client visits for a one month period (about 1,800 visits); names were randomly chosen from each service list according to the number of cases seen in that particular service. The clients were called about a month after the target visit. Interviews were conducted by social workers and others familiar with the hospital routine.

The most recent survey showed that 95% of the clients interviewed had an overall favorable impression of VHUP, and that 97% would recommend the hospital to others. In 1985, when the first survey was conducted, 89% of the clients interviewed had a favorable impression.

As VHUP is a teaching hospital, the client's initial contact is with a student, and 97% of the clients interviewed found the interaction with students to be satisfactory or very satisfactory. 94% were satisfied or very satisfied with their contact with clinicians.

In 1985, 16% of the clients interviewed were dissatisfied with the discharge instructions. Discharge procedures then were streamlined; written instructions are now given to the client before the pet is returned, and a nurse is available to answer any questions and to explain the care required. The recent survey showed that the satisfaction rate with discharge procedures had risen to 99%. Also the waiting time for discharges has been reduced to 22 minutes. The most recent survey also indicated that while fees are high at VHUP (by necessity), 86% of the clients were aware of them, a substantial improvement from previous surveys.

The survey also identified where procedural changes have created problems. In 1985, 21% of the clients were dissatisfied with the telephone communications system for appointments and messages. Procedures were changed and staff was added, and by the second survey only 6% of the clients were dissatisfied. However, during the most recent survey it was found that again 21% of the clients interviewed were dissatisfied with telephone communications. Recently the appointment secretaries were given additional telephone lines to answer, from the department secretaries, and this may have increased the "on-hold" time for clients. These statistics also reflect the dilemma of clinicians, who, due to their varied duties, are not always available when clients phone. Since the survey, the receptionists have attended seminars on telephone communications, and other solutions are being explored as well.

Another area needing attention is the waiting time prior to being seen. While VHUP is a teaching hospital and often sees cases requiring extensive work-ups, steps are being taken to reduce the waiting time. One such step has been the hiring of a liaison person in the Emergency Service to handle progress reports for clients waiting to hear about their pet's condition. We are also exploring the possibility of modifying the schedule to reflect the high number of unexpected lengthy work-ups.

The annual client survey provides VHUP with a device to monitor whether changes initiated to improve service really work. We hope, if you are called, you will participate in the survey to enable us to better meet our clients' needs.