Authors' conclusions
The study provides a slightly ambiguous picture of how well the experiences of these particular patients correlates with those of the health care professionals. The reported disagreement concerning even factual questions indicates that patient assessments should be interpreted with caution and that health care professionals should make greater efforts to ensure that patients understand the medical terms used in the communication with them. In addition, the study indicates that disagreement on subjective questions is unlikely to be due to a lack of medical knowledge among patients or misunderstanding of the quality of the treatment and care provided. To the contrary, a more subtle interpretation of the observed differences indicates that patients' and health care professionals' assessments each contribute to a subtle overall picture of health service quality. The reported correlations between patient experience indicate that it is highly likely that patients who assess technical-professional quality allow their judgement to be influenced by organisational experiences and the psychosocial interplay that they have had with the personnel during their hospital stay. In a single case, though, the patients' assessment did not correlate exclusively with interpersonal and organisational experiences, but also with an experience of a more technical character. It should be stressed that it is often difficult to determine which variables reflect cause and which reflect effect. In other words the data do not allow the unambiguous conclusion to be drawn that the patients' interpersonal and organisational experiences predict their assessment of technical quality. In principle, the opposite cause-effect relationship could apply.
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