

cemplicity°

A smiling female doctor with dark hair tied back, wearing a white lab coat, is seated at a desk. She is looking at a laptop screen and has her hands on the keyboard. A blue stethoscope is visible on the desk in the foreground. The background shows a blurred office or clinical setting with white walls and a blue cabinet.

**A guide to selecting  
the right Patient  
Experience Survey**

# A guide to selecting the right Patient Experience Survey

## What to ask your patients

Once you have decided you want to start collecting patient feedback, one of the most important things you'll then decide is what to ask your patients.

It is critical that when you make this decision, you are clear about the goals of your programme and that you ask patients about things that matter to them.

Most of our best programmes start with an existing survey tool (a 'tool' is simply a set of survey questions). There are hundreds of different tools being used around the globe so knowing where to start can feel a bit overwhelming. Using an existing tool saves you the time and cost of designing a survey and leaves the door open for future benchmarking. It will also give you more confidence that your programme will solicit relevant and actionable feedback.

But, before you can choose your tool you need to decide what type of programme you want to run. There are a few different types:



### Net Promoter Score (NPS)

The NPS simply asks a patient how likely they are to recommend the service or organisation. It is a popular commercial model and widely used in other sectors like banking or telecommunications.

NPS can be a useful indicator of overall performance and can be used to benchmark between similar organisations. However, it doesn't give you a lot of context around the rating which is crucial to drive improvement.

Where NPS is used, best practice for healthcare is to use it within a wider patient experience survey.



## Experience Surveys

Patient experience surveys are designed to measure whether or not a service met the patient's needs. Good patient experience survey questions are designed around what matters most to patients and will give comprehensive and actionable feedback. There is a strong link between good patient experience and good patient outcomes. Providers can use their patient experience results to focus improvement efforts.



## Satisfaction

A patient's satisfaction with a service is different to their experience and it is increasingly rare to use satisfaction as a measure of the quality of a health service. Evidence suggests that satisfaction is affected by many unrelated factors e.g. parking hassles, so results need to be treated with caution.

## Survey length

When choosing a survey tool, providers often want to consider the survey length. For interactions that are quick and easy, like buying a coffee, a short survey is important. Nobody wants to complete a 10 minute questionnaire on their experience with the barista at the corner shop! But healthcare is different. Being a patient is a complex, memorable, and important event. Not only is a patient deeply involved, they understand how giving feedback on their experience can help others.

In this context, evidence shows that the length is not really that important. What is important is the relevance of the questions to the individual patient. A patient will invest a lot of time completing your survey if all the questions are relevant to their own experience.

**Choosing the right questions is much more important than the number of questions.**

## Patient stories

No matter how many well-designed questions in your survey there is no substitute for hearing about the patients' experiences in their own words. Ratings are important for tracking, benchmarking and identifying outliers. They tell you what needs to be fixed. The patient stories tell you how to fix things, and why.

### With a digital programme collecting and analysing comments is easy.

Many existing survey tools don't leave many opportunities for the patient's story. This is because until recently most survey programmes were paper based and collecting and analysing open ended comments manually is prohibitively expensive. With a digital programme and the latest AI tools, collecting and analysing comments is easy so we encourage all clients to add comment boxes if they are not included in your core survey.

## Tailoring

In most situations you will be able to use an existing tool without any changes. For example, in an acute inpatient care setting there is great evidence on the key drivers of a good experience and there are many well-designed tools. You can often just pick one up and run with it.

In other settings that are a bit more complex or unusual you might need to tailor an existing tool. For example, if you are working with a disadvantaged local community the wording of a tool developed overseas might not be quite right.

A good place to start is to enlist a research company to run local cognitive testing. This is a process of testing and refining the tool with your local population until the wording makes sense in your context.

If there is really no tool that will meet your needs, you will need to create a new

one. Organisations like Picker Institute Europe have entire libraries of survey questions to start you off. You could pull together a selection of validated questions or start completely from scratch. In either case, you will need a qualified researcher or academic body to make sure your survey tool is robust, relevant, and well-designed.

## Languages

Many of our clients want their patients to be able to respond to surveys in their own language.

Some validated tools will offer language options. The most robust of these will have been thoroughly tested in each language with patients for whom that is their first language.

If a translation is not available, options are:

- 1. Native speakers in the clients' team can translate the English version and provide this to us to set this up in the Cemplicity system.**
- 2. Cemplicity can commission a professional translation company to undertake the translation.**

There are best-practice approaches to the robust translation of survey tools. This can add quite a bit of cost to the set up of a programme so the number of languages offered needs to be carefully weighed up against the cost of translations.



### **Cemplicity's Insights Team**

When you start working with Cemplicity, our Insights team will listen to your needs and give you advice to ensure the survey questions you use will drive improvement in your care setting. We also work with survey design experts and can recommend suitable people to support your project as needed.

## Resources

### **Picker Institute Europe**

Picker are acknowledged leaders in patient experience survey design and improvement work and are deeply involved across the NHS. Their surveys are used in over 65 countries, including NZ, Australia and Ireland. Use of Picker surveys will incur licence fees.

[www.picker.org](http://www.picker.org)

### **Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care**

The Australian Commission has developed and approved a patient experience survey that can be used for all overnight admitted inpatients and day stay patients. It is well tested and free of charge.

[www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/indicators/hospital-patient-experience/](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/indicators/hospital-patient-experience/)

### **NZ Health Quality and Safety Commission (Primary Care)**

The NZ primary care survey was developed by the HQSC in partnership with researchers and academic bodies. It gathers both patient experience of their GP visit and patient experience of the integration of health services across the sector. This is a long survey designed to be delivered digitally so patients only complete questions that are relevant to them.

[www.hqsc.govt.nz/resources/resource-library/primary-care-patient-experience-survey-methodology-and-procedures/](http://www.hqsc.govt.nz/resources/resource-library/primary-care-patient-experience-survey-methodology-and-procedures/)

# cemplicity°

**United Kingdom**

0800 098 8525

**Australia**

1800 765 924

**New Zealand**

0800 157 258

[hello@cemplicity.com](mailto:hello@cemplicity.com)

[cemplicity.com](https://cemplicity.com)