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## Review article

# Patient feedback questionnaires to enhance consultation skills of healthcare professionals: A systematic review

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To identify patient feedback questionnaires that assess the development of consultation skills (CSs) of practitioners.

**Methods:** We conducted a systematic search using seven databases from inception to January 2017 to identify self-completed patient feedback questionnaires assessing and enhancing the development of CSs of individual practitioners. Results were checked for eligibility by three authors, and disagreements were resolved by discussion. Reference lists of relevant studies and Open Grey were searched for additional studies.

**Results:** Of 16,312 studies retrieved, sixteen were included, describing twelve patient feedback questionnaires that were mostly designed for physicians in primary care settings. Most questionnaires had limited data regarding their psychometric properties, except for the Doctor Interpersonal Skills Questionnaire (DISQ). Most studies conducted follow-up, capturing positive views of practitioners regarding the process (n = 14). Feedback was repeated by only three studies, demonstrating different levels of improvement in practitioners' performance.

**Conclusion:** Identified questionnaires were mainly focused on physicians, however, to support using patient feedback, questionnaires need to be validated with other practitioners.

**Practice implications:** Several patient feedback questionnaires are available, showing potential for supporting practitioners' development. Valid questionnaires should be used with appropriate practitioners in developing more evidence for the impact they may have on actual consultations.

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### Contents

1. Introduction	00
1.1. Aim & objectives	00
2. Methods	00
2.1. Literature search	00
2.2. Inclusion criteria	00
2.3. Study selection	00
2.4. Data extraction and quality assessment	00
2.5. Dealing with missing data	00
3. Results	00
3.1. Quality assessment	00
3.2. General characteristics of included studies	00
3.3. Description of questionnaires	00
3.4. Description of participants	00
3.5. Questionnaire administration and feedback reporting	00
3.6. Follow-up and impact of patient feedback	00
4. Discussion and conclusion	00

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4.1. Discussion ..... 00  
 4.1.1. Summary of main results ..... 00  
 4.1.2. Questionnaires ..... 00  
 4.1.3. Participants ..... 00  
 4.1.4. Questionnaire administration ..... 00  
 4.1.5. Response rate ..... 00  
 4.1.6. Format of patient feedback report ..... 00  
 4.1.7. Follow-up to patient feedback reports ..... 00  
 4.1.8. Agreements and disagreements with other reviews ..... 00  
 4.1.9. Strengths and weaknesses of the review ..... 00  
 4.2. Conclusion ..... 00  
 4.3. Practice implications ..... 00  
 Conflict of interest ..... 00  
 Funding ..... 00  
 Author contributions ..... 00  
 References ..... 00

**1. Introduction**

Good consultation skills (CSs) are essential for effective patient encounters and it has been shown to drive positive outcomes including enhancing patient adherence and satisfaction [1–6]. An emphasis was given by the British Medical Association (BMA) and the General Medical Council (GMC) indicating the importance for the quality of the physician’s professional work to be assessed at regular intervals, by patients and colleagues [7], thus supporting their continuous professional development [8,9]. Numerous methods are described in the literature regarding the assessment of practitioners’ consultations skills, including assessments conducted by assessors [10], peers [11–13], or by patients [14–17]. A combination of methods are suggested to provide a more holistic assessment [18–20]. However, collecting feedback from patients is probably the most suitable method [21]. Patients, as customers of the healthcare system are capable of highlighting weak areas of performance that are not usually covered by other conventional methods [6,22], or not recognised by practitioners themselves [23].

Patient feedback can be collected using questionnaires and/or by conducting interviews [24,25]. However, the full benefit of feedback can only be realised by using it to support professionals’ development. It can help practitioners to better understand their skills, acknowledge their strengths, identify areas needing further attention, and thus directing them to where improvements are needed [26–28].

Using feedback collected from patients to enhance the CSs of individual practitioners is not thoroughly studied. Initial searches identified two systematic reviews that investigated this domain [29,30]. While these reviews identified several feedback questionnaires, they were focused on assessing CSs of physicians. However, patient consultations are currently conducted by a wide variety of different practitioners and not only by physicians. For example, in the UK since 2005, several practitioners are legally allowed to prescribe medications to patients, including nurses and pharmacists [31–33], thus the number of patient consultations has greatly increased. Therefore, this systematic review was conducted

to identify patient feedback questionnaires used to assess and enhance the development of individual CSs of all practitioners across all settings.

*1.1. Aim & objectives*

This review aimed to identify and describe patient feedback questionnaires that assess the development of CSs of individual practitioners. The objectives were to describe identified studies and questionnaires according to the following: (a) name of the questionnaire, (b) practitioners assessed, (c) assessment setting, (d) questionnaire administration method (patient recruitment, individual in charge of administration, and concealment methods), (e) patient feedback reporting methods, (f) follow up to patient feedback and its impact.

**2. Methods**

*2.1. Literature search*

A systematic search was conducted to identify relevant studies using the following databases: MEDLINE, EMBASE, AMED (via Ebsco), Web of Science, SCOPUS, CINAHL, and PsycInfo, from inception of the databases up to January 2017. A protocol was developed and registered on the international database of prospectively registered systematic reviews (PROSPERO) (CRD42017055365). Search results were limited by two filters: English language and publication type: journal, and they were exported into the reference manager Endnote 7.2.1, where duplicates were identified and removed. An example search strategy is provided in Table 1, which was adapted appropriately when searching the other databases. Reference lists of included studies and of related systematic reviews were examined to identify additional potentially eligible studies. Open Grey was also searched for grey literature, and corresponding authors were contacted by email where necessary for missing data.

**Table 1**  
Example Search Strategy using Medline.

Search	Results
1 "patient satisfaction".mp.	89133
2 ("health?care professionals" or "general practitioner" or doctor or physician or nurse* or pharmacist*).mp	1466359
3 (Feedback or questionnaire" or assessment or instrument or "evaluation tool" or survey or "performance appraisal" or "resident evaluation" or "performance feedback").mp	2158301
4 ("interpersonal skills" or "communication skills" or "consultation skills" or "professional competence" or competence or consult* or communication).mp	599945
5 1 and 2 and 3 and 4	3938
6 limit 5 to (English language and journal article)	3629

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