

SERVICE RECOVERY IN PHYSICIAN SERVICE DELIVERY

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ABSTRACT

In this study, a critical incidents analysis was conducted on data from 341 patient interviews in an attempt to better understand the nature of the service failures and subsequent recovery efforts that take place in a physician's office service setting.

Analysis of this information revealed the service failures reported overwhelmingly represent core system service failures ranging from misdiagnoses to waiting lines. Interestingly, regardless of the type of service failure reported, patients tended to rate the severity of the failures harshly across the board. The perceived level of effectiveness of each recovery attempt, however, varied by recovery method employed. Unfortunately, though, no clear pattern emerged as to which service recovery method should be used to correct each of the different failure types because the perceived effectiveness of each was also a function of a variety of contextual factors specific to the patients' visits including the reason for the patients' visits and the length of time respondents had actually been a patient of the physician in question.

Thus, while it has been generally recommended service recovery effort effectiveness for core service failures might be considerably improved by simply increasing employees' understanding of the procedural operations of the firm, it appears it would also be beneficial to train employees in a physicians office setting to consider the context in which the service failure has occurred and to, then, link these factors to the best combination of remedies for the particular patient being served.