

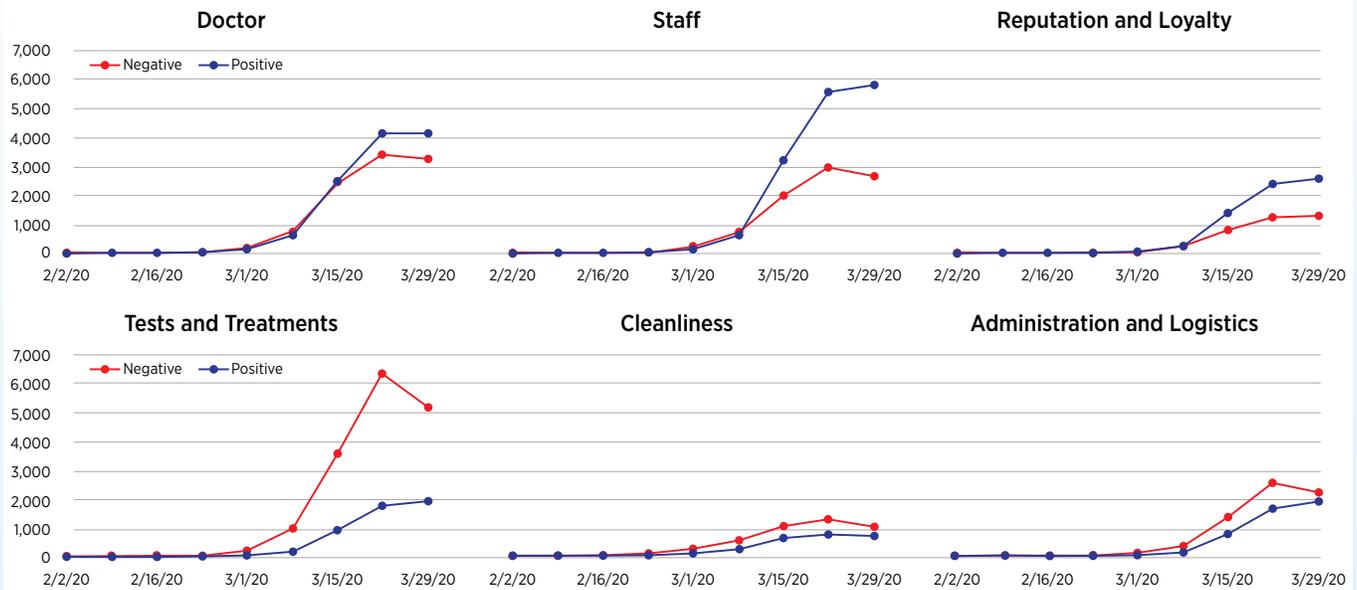
How COVID-19 Is Shaping the Patient Experience

Comment Analysis Paints Dynamic Picture

Press Ganey’s analysis of more than 7 million comments from patient experience surveys received from mid February through April 4, 2020, shows explosive growth in the number of comments mentioning *COVID-19* or *coronavirus*.



Observations from Patients’ COVID-19 Comments

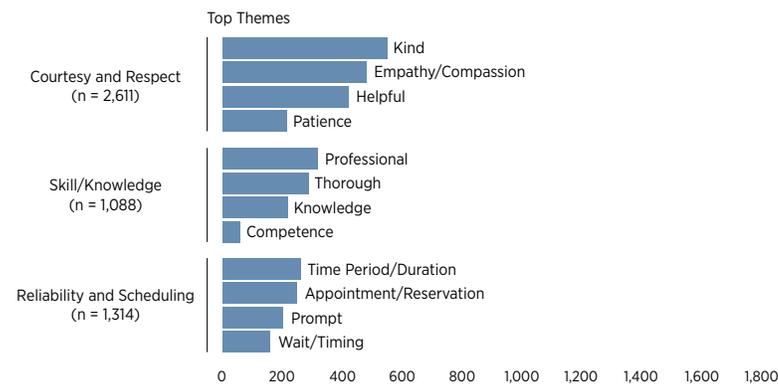


Approximately 35,000 *COVID-19*-related comments were isolated from national survey responses received during this period, leading to nearly 125,000 unique insights. In both positive and negative comments, favorable trends can be seen in patients’ perceptions of their interactions with physicians and staff and in loyalty and reputation measures, **indicating that patients appreciate and value the work that clinicians and other staff are doing to provide care during the *COVID-19* crisis.** An early spike in negative comments related to tests and treatments began to reverse by the end of the month. Comments related to cleanliness and administration and logistics are still heightened but appear to be leveling off. These changes may reflect **improvements in operational efficiency thanks to aggressive planning and response efforts.**

Patients Value Kindness, Professionalism

The kindness and professionalism of doctors and staff continue to be top themes in patients' positive *COVID-19*-related commentary. The comments also suggest a keen awareness of the challenges providers face under the present circumstances and a deep appreciation for their efforts to educate and reassure patients.

Physicians (n = 11,762)



Sample Comments

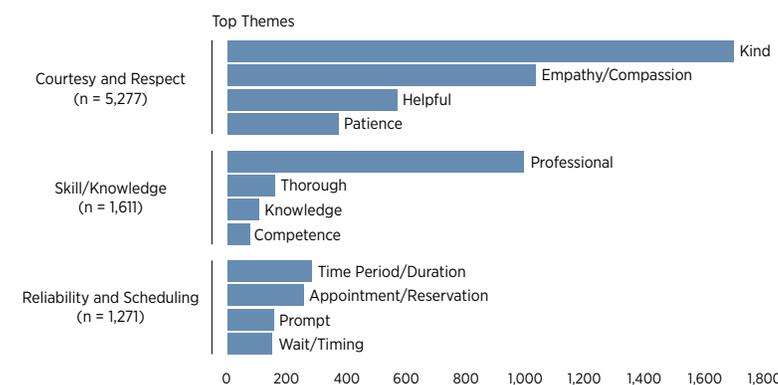
“As soon as we called to let the nurse know we arrived for *coronavirus* testing, we were immediately greeted by the doctor and nurse. It was very comforting to see how calm, kind, and concerned they were about our well-being.”

“This was a sick visit during the *COVID-19* ramp-up. We were treated with respect and concern. Everyone involved was very professional, yet warm and encouraging.”

“The nurses and X-ray staff were efficient and tireless, even with the coronavirus scare fully underway.”

“I was there when *COVID-19* had us all on high alert and they were all so professional and calming.”

Staff (n = 15,477)



Recommendations for Building Strong Caregiver–Patient Relationships

Share these insights with physicians and caregivers to remind them of patients' gratitude for all they are doing during this crisis.

Educate and encourage physicians and caregivers to use the following **Universal Relationship Skills** to create a connection with each patient at the start of every encounter.

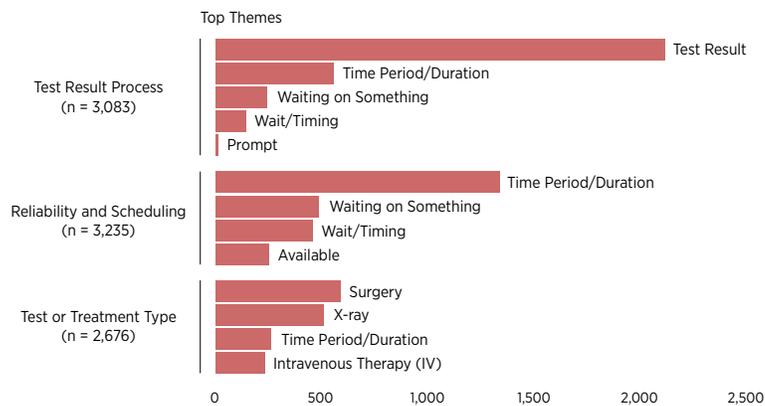
- Make eye contact and be aware of body language.
- Introduce yourself and your role.
- Acknowledge the current situation with a core safety message.
- Always prompt the patient to share concerns.
- Narrate any care that you provide.

Concerns About Safety, Procedural Issues

Many of the negative comments in which *COVID-19* or *coronavirus* are mentioned reflect patients' awareness that the pandemic response is influencing operational issues around routine and other care. Not surprisingly, the comments also indicate patients' concerns about efforts being taken to ensure safety.

Sample Comments

Tests and Treatments (n = 16,258)



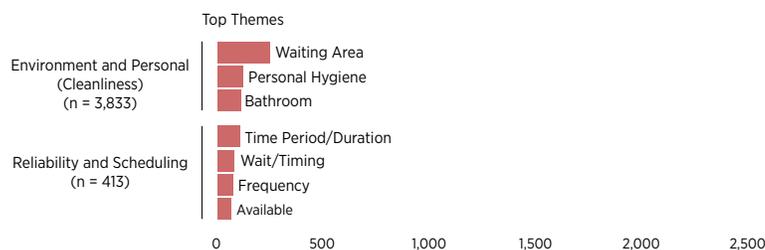
“There was a blip when I went to the lab for tests. The technician got pulled away a few times by her colleagues asking *coronavirus* questions. I spent over 30 minutes in the lab just for blood tests and EKG.”

“CT scan never scheduled, perhaps because of *coronavirus*.”

“Disappointed in *COVID-19* preparedness. Should be using temporal thermometer on all individuals entering, and masks given to those with temperature or other symptoms. No one bothered to spray surfaces between patients in the X-ray room. Same pillow used by multiple patients.”

“Given the presence of *coronavirus*, I was surprised at how tightly packed the seats are in your waiting area, how few hand sanitizer stations there were.”

Cleanliness (n = 4,246)



Recommendations for Building Patient Trust in Practices and Processes

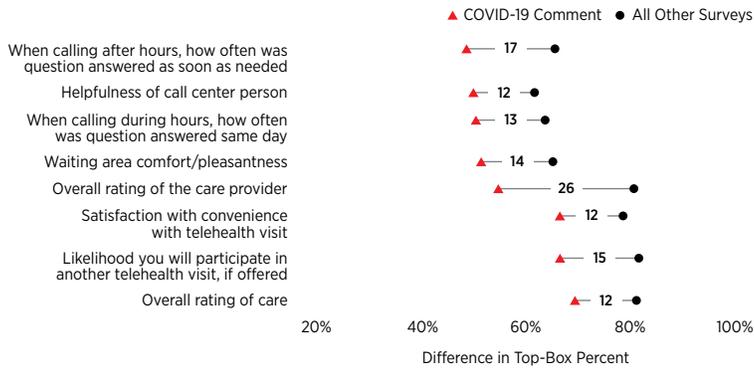
Caregivers and staff should consistently communicate with patients about the steps they are taking to ensure their safety, set realistic expectations about care access and timing, and use the following high-reliability communication tools and behaviors.

- Pay attention to detail: Self-check using STAR (Stop, Think, Act, Review).
- Communicate clearly: Ask clarifying questions, repeat and read back, and use the SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) technique to facilitate prompt and appropriate communication.
- Have a questioning attitude: Qualify the source, validate the content, and verify your action.
- Speak up for safety: Escalate as needed using ARCC (Ask a question to prompt a safety concern, Request a change, voice a Concern if there's resistance, and use the Chain of Command if necessary).

Impact on Patients' Rating of Experience

A comparative analysis of medical practice and emergency department patient experience performance in health systems from early pandemic “hot zones” (Washington state, California, and New York) shows significant differences between patients who do and do not mention COVID-19 in their comments. Following are some of the areas in which large gaps between the two groups point to **opportunities for understanding the needs of patients during this crisis**.

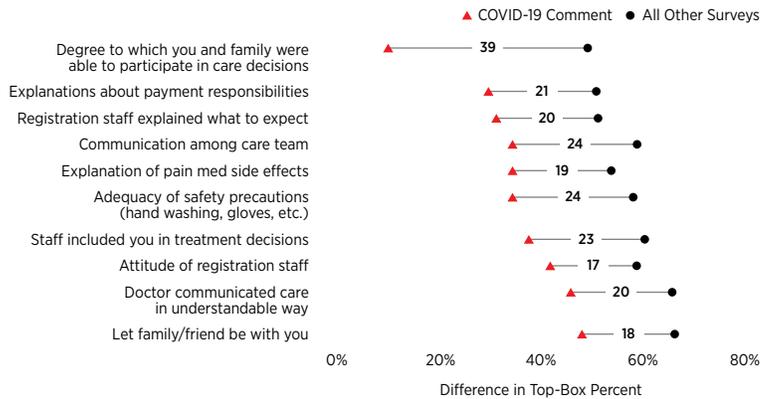
Medical Practice



Large differences can be seen in patient perceptions about the adequacy of communication and the degree to which patients feel in control of their situations, as indicated by the gaps in items related to decision making and provider and staff communication.

Concerns about logistics also appear to weigh more heavily among patients who mention COVID-19. In the medical practice space, this can be seen in lower top box percentages for call center and telehealth functionality. In the ED, it emerges in assessments of registration staff and safety precautions.

Emergency Department



The data show wide disparity in call-related items. This points to the **importance of effective and responsive telephone communication during this period** when most care concerns are being addressed remotely, at least initially.

Communication and Transparency: Meeting Needs Today to Build Enduring Trust

Extended periods of uncertainty give rise to unanticipated needs and anxiety. The nature of the coronavirus pandemic has led patients and caregivers to look to health systems and their leaders for reassurance. Patients and families respect the commitment and risk that front-line caregivers have embraced and are relying on them in this time of crisis. Understanding and meeting their needs with communication and transparency is essential. This is a critical moment and an important opportunity to build unbreakable bonds of trust with patients and families that will extend long past the pandemic.

Consult Press Ganey’s guide, “High-Leverage Skills: Top 3 Actions to Support Safe, Exceptional Care in Crisis Situations,” on the COVID-19 resources page at pressganey.com/COVID19.