Patient satisfaction with day-case cataract surgery in Ireland

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ABSTRACT
There are no existing studies published in Ireland which examine patients’ satisfaction with specific aspects of day surgery for cataracts. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to assess patients’ satisfaction with their experience of day-case cataract surgery and to explore factors that may enhance or detract from this satisfaction. The study addressed whether the selected variables (provision of information, choice of treatment, and family/social support) are associated with the satisfaction of patients admitted to the hospital as day cases for cataract surgery. The study also aimed to identify the problems/difficulties experienced by patients postoperatively. A quantitative approach was used, adopting a previously validated questionnaire for the purpose of data collection. A convenience sample of the first 100 patients attending preassessment clinic was used. The response rate was 59 per cent (n=59). Although the findings suggest patients are generally satisfied with their experience of day-case cataract surgery, support for patients in the immediate postoperative period needs to be strengthened to enhance satisfaction further. Despite the fact that patients are generally satisfied with the information they receive, some deficits in the information-giving process were found. The two main problems encountered by patients postoperatively were pain (16.9 per cent, n=10) and fatigue (15.3 per cent, n=9). The main implications for practice concerned the level of information in the patient educational pamphlets as some patients required more information while others wanted less. It is recommended therefore that information booklets containing two different levels of information ie, full and partial disclosure, could be devised. More instruction is required with regard to management of pain postoperatively. A qualitative study is necessary to elicit how support for patients can be improved postoperatively.

Key words: Patient satisfaction, day surgery, cataract, questionnaire, patient information, postoperative pain.

INTRODUCTION
There has been a huge growth in the incidence of one-day procedures being carried out in Irish hospitals over the past two decades. In line with all other specialities, day-case activity in ophthalmology has increased significantly. In the ophthalmic unit that is the focus of this study, day case treatments have increased considerably in the past 10 years and, in 2004, a total of 3,215 patients were treated as day cases (Department of Health and Children, 2005). However, it is only in the past five years, with the appointment of a second consultant to the unit and the use of a more modern and less invasive surgical technique, namely phacoemulsification, that cataract surgery has been performed on day case patients.

This change in practice provided the stimulus for this study. Being committed to a philosophy of evidence-based practice, and the absence of published research on this topic within an Irish context, highlighted the need for our own research. Most of the research conducted to date has been in the UK and to a lesser extent America, Australia and Finland, and was published in the early 1990s, at a time when day-case activity was being promoted by providers of healthcare within these countries as an efficient and cost-effective way of delivering care to patients.

Literature review
Despite the increase in the number of day-case cataract operations performed in Ireland, no published research is available within an Irish context. Studies have been carried out in other countries, which examine patients’ experiences within day surgery and the factors that influence satisfaction (Allen and Oberle 1993; Barnes 1997; Davies and Tyers 1992; Fan et al 1997; Haynes et al 2001; Law 1997; Lowe et al 1991; Rose et al 1999; Smith 1993; Smithson 1993; Strong et al 1991). Although the evidence suggests that patients who undergo cataract operations as day cases are generally satisfied with the care they receive (Davies and Tyers 1992; Haynes et al 2001; Hughes et al 2001; Lowe et al 1991; Rose et al 1999) some participants stated a preference for inpatient care.

Contradictory evidence exists as to what factors influence patient satisfaction with day-care surgery. Some studies highlight the importance of providing patients with a choice of treatment (Davies and Tyers 1992; Fan et al 1997; Otte 1996; Smith 1993; Smithson 1993) whilst others believe patients prefer to allow doctors and nurses make their choices (Avis 1992; Lowe et al 1991). Other factors briefly examined in the literature included family/social support (Barnes 1997; Davies and Tyers 1992; Fan et al 1997; Lowe et al 1991) and patients’ health problems (Fan et al 1997). Whilst neither were seen as a contraindication for having surgery as a day case, patients opting for inpatient care were more likely to be those with a particular health problem or lack of family/social support (Fan et al 1997).

The most common theme to emerge from this literature review relates to information difficulties. In particular, the...