

# Empathetic care from practitioners associated with better patient satisfaction

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A review of 14 studies has found that empathetic care is associated with improved patient satisfaction, a metric linked to important implications for patient outcomes. However, strong conclusions were limited by

quality and applicability of evidence. The review is [published](#) in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Increased patient satisfaction is associated with improved survival after [myocardial infarction](#); reduced [hospital readmission](#); higher general quality of care; better patient safety; and other outcomes. It has also been reported to improve medication adherence. Hospital reimbursement is also often linked to patient satisfaction scores. Research on health care practitioner empathy—which is commonly taken to involve understanding, expressing understanding, and therapeutic action—may provide important insights for improving the metric of patient satisfaction.

Researchers from the University of Leicester reviewed 14 published randomized trials comprised of 80 health care practitioners and 1,986 patients across several locations, settings, and practitioner types to evaluate the effect of empathy on patient satisfaction. Based on all the studies reviewed, practitioner empathy was associated with a positive change in patient satisfaction; however, inadequate reporting hindered the ability to draw definitive conclusions about the precise effect size.

The authors caution clinicians and policymakers against over-measuring [patient satisfaction](#) when implementing this evidence, as it may adversely affect practitioner well-being. They advise that future research should address barriers to implementation through better measurement and better reporting.

**More information:** *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2024).  
[www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M23-2168](http://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M23-2168)

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