Patient satisfaction during radiation therapy: Correlates and patient suggestions.

BACKGROUND: Assessing patient satisfaction might help to detect so far unknown patient needs and could contribute to quality assurance within the health care system. We evaluated patient satisfaction and its correlates in a consecutive sample of patients undergoing external beam radiation therapy. PATIENTS AND METHODS: Patient satisfaction was evaluated within a prospective study with two validated instruments (FPZ, ZUF-8) during the first week of radiation therapy in two university-based radiation oncology departments. RESULTS: A total of 273 patients could be analyzed. Most patients were irradiated for breast or urogenital cancer. Overall patient satisfaction was high (94.9-98.8%). The most important items for patient satisfaction included the following: "skills of physicians" followed by "physician contact with patients," "care," and "information" (Tab. 2). Neither center nor disease entity correlated with global patient satisfaction. Of the patients, 46% reported that they would have preferred additional information prior to the onset of radiotherapy. Patients who sought additional information reported a lower global patient satisfaction (p< 0.001). In multiple linear regression analysis, the need for more information, male gender, and a higher level of education were significant predictors for lower global patient satisfaction (Tab. 6). CONCLUSION: During the first week of radiation therapy, patients
rate patient-physician interaction and communication on treatment and disease as important factors for their satisfaction. Supplying additional information to subsets of patients prior to starting radiotherapy might help to further improve satisfaction.