

## Mystery Shoppers – A quality review process in radiology

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#### Introduction

The national Friends and Family Test (FFT), launched in 2013, is an important feedback tool that supports the fundamental principle that people who use NHS services should have the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience. However, outside of the FFT, quality assessment tools within radiology often centre around the clinical aspect of the patient pathway rather than evaluate the patients experience of the whole journey from referral to examination.

The use of mystery shoppers in the retail sector is widely embraced to assess quality of the customer experience. The same process can be mirrored within radiology to review the quality of the service provided.

The idea of using mystery shoppers in radiology was utilised by the radiology accreditation team at Derriford Hospital, Plymouth as a means of quality testing the patient pathway. The process was then introduced within ultrasound at the Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust. The radiology process from receiving the appointment letter through to being greeted into the examination room by the radiographer or radiologist is reviewed using this process.



The only **Mystery Shopper** you really need is your Customer



#### The Mystery Shopper Concept

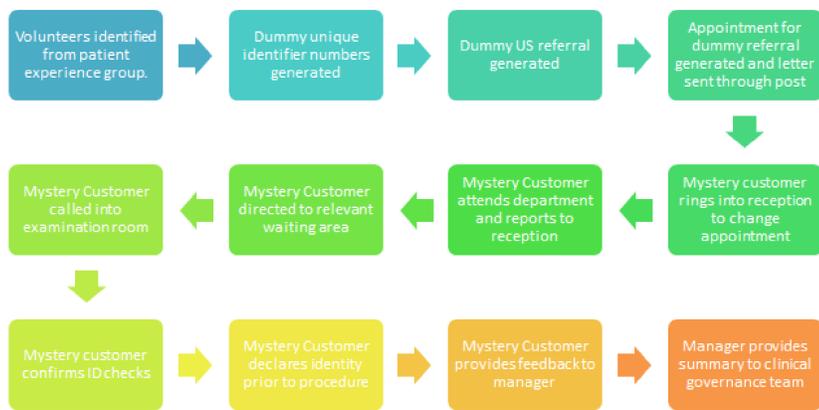
Mystery shopping was standard practice by the early 1940s as a way to measure employee integrity. Tools used for mystery shopping assessments range from simple questionnaires to complete audio and video recordings.

In June 2008, the American Medical Association's Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs released a recommendation on the use of "secret shopper patients". The Recommendation states: "Physicians have an ethical responsibility to engage in activities that contribute to continual improvements in patient care. One method for promoting such quality improvement is through the use of secret shopper 'patients' who have been appropriately trained to provide feedback about physician performance in the clinical setting."<sup>[1]</sup>

Since 2010, mystery shopping has become abundant in the medical tourism industry, with healthcare providers and medical facilities using the tool to assess and improve the customer service experience.<sup>[2, 3]</sup>



### Mystery Customer Audit Process



#### Why use Mystery Shoppers?

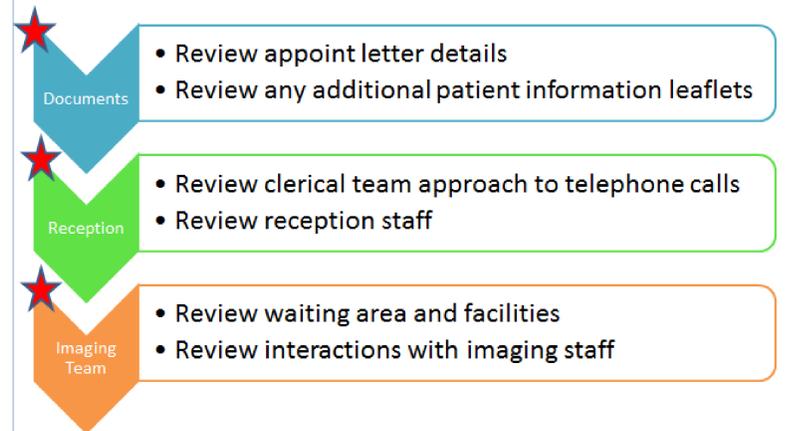
Mystery shopping feedback can be used as the basis for Continuous Improvement Programmes and staff performance management – the process will not only identify what needs fixing, but will dictate and provide evidence for a programme which will support changing staff behaviour and help correct the issues highlighted

This process provides an accurate picture of the patient experience. Continual monitoring will ensure patient satisfaction is at the highest possible level.

Knowing, from an impartial point of view, that your patients are happy and receiving the best service from the staff team is something that is immensely valuable to ensure the service succeeds.



### Mystery Shopper Reviews



#### Outcomes

##### Positive facts identified

- Clear documentation
- Clear instructions
- Helpful clerical team
- Friendly reception staff
- Friendly Radiographers

##### Negative Facts Identified

- Poor signage
- Issues with cleanliness of waiting areas
- Dummy ID's are a hindrance
- Repeated utilisation of same mystery shopper potentially skewed results

#### Conclusion

Utilising Mystery Shoppers gives an holistic review of your service beyond the examination and report. Service user feedback gives an honest and impartial review of the environment our patients access on a daily basis. Learn from the issues identified and improve the shopper experience for both your patients and staff



#### Pitfalls

To comply with local Trust information Governance the mystery shoppers at Hull had to have "dummy" patient ID's generated so that there were no identifiable parameters that could relate to the volunteer. This resulted in the names, dates of birth, and in one case the gender, of the "dummy" patient being completely at odds with our volunteers. The dummy ID was easily recognisable on the radiology information system and therefore staff were not blinded to the review.

The feedback related to the documentation and non-face to face contact was helpful but the assessment of the staff interactions was limited by the ID issue.

A limiting factor in the Plymouth Trust was that the repeated use of the same mystery shopper resulted in the risk of her being identified on sight by some of the radiology staff, this is a further potential source of bias.

#### Resources

Mystery Shopper questionnaires used by both trusts are available on the BMUS website. Visit [bmus.org](http://bmus.org) for details

1. The AMA promotes the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health. <https://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/38/a08ceioreports.pdf> accessed 20.10.17  
2. Mystery shopping new trend in Medical Tourism, Novasans Archived June 17, 2015  
3. "Secret Shopper Patients". [www.ama-assn.org. https://www.ama-assn.org/about-us/council-ethical-judicial-affairs-ceja-reports](http://www.ama-assn.org/about-us/council-ethical-judicial-affairs-ceja-reports)