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## Quality Evaluation in Professional Knowledge- Intensive Services

The study concentrates on surgical services provided by the private health-care sector, in which business organisations provide additional and complementary medical services. This topic is very interesting because the growth in this sector is approximately 5 per cent a year, and private health care is increasingly important in providing crucial medical services, especially with respect to out-patient treatment.

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyse the evaluation of quality in professional knowledge-intensive services in a private hospital. First, the study discusses medical services as professional services. Second, the article reviews relationships in medical services. Third, a theoretical framework for understanding the surgical-service process and its quality dimensions is created. Fourth, a description of the data collection and statistical methods used in the study is presented. Fifth, quality dimensions in the surgical-service process are derived by factor analysis. Finally, conclusions and managerial implications based on the study are provided.

The population of this study consisted of surgical patients in a private hospital. The non-probability sample was comprised of all surgical patients at one private hospital during a four-month period. In total, 240 questionnaires were delivered and the final number of returned questionnaires was 198. The response rate was 83 per cent. After introductory analysis the empirical material was reduced by means of factor analysis.

In private surgical services the output quality can be referred to as the 'curing', whereas the process quality can be referred to as the 'caring'. The findings of this study support the assumption that all elements of the service process must function well and in coordination to produce excellent service quality. Despite the importance of the surgical procedure itself to service-quality experience, good performance of other service elements is also needed to produce excellent service quality. The process dimensions of service quality should not be underestimated because they substantially support the output-quality dimensions. The elements of the service process must form an integral entity. ■