Exploring Patient Experience PX

Johanna Kaipio
Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering
Aalto University, Finland
johanna.kaipio@aalto.fi

Mari Tyllinen
Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering
Aalto University, Finland
mari.tyllinen@aalto.fi

Marko Nieminen
Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering
Aalto University, Finland
marko.nieminen@aalto.fi

Andre Kushniruk
School of Health Information Science
University of Victoria
Victoria, Canada
andre@uvic.ca

Elizabeth Borycki
School of Health Information Science
University of Victoria
Victoria, Canada
emb@uvic.ca

Abstract
This paper contributes to the discussion and definition of patient experience (PX). The aim is to promote discussions around the concept and its conceptualization. Our experience is, that in order to support patient-centredness in healthcare and user-centred development of related services and technologies, we need to understand following: What patient experience is about? How can it be defined, researched and measured?

Author Keywords
Patient experience; User experience; Healthcare;

Introduction
Healthcare is moving towards employing a more patient and consumer centric practices and approaches. Such a shift is reflective of the need to provide high quality services that lead to a pleasant if not even enjoyable patient experience. Patients – or more broadly users of healthcare services – are becoming more and more demanding of healthcare providers and organizations where health services are concerned.

Patient experience (PX) has started to emerge in the design and professional discussion [1]. PX has been identified to be one of the top three priorities of for hospital leaders in the next three years [12]. The concept has also been included in the development goals for public healthcare in UK. Our own experience is similar: Our recent activities in ongoing activities in the capital area of Finland (the new children’s hospital [3] and the Apotti programme [4]) indicate an urgent need to define and operationalize PX. Emerging consumer health information technologies such as personal health records and consumer health applications bring such healthcare information, technologies, and services to citizens’ use that were previously targeted for healthcare professionals only.
Despite these needs, there is little research literature that fully describes and defines PX. Such a definition would support patient-centred design and the evaluation of healthcare services from the end-user perspective. In addition to the high-quality medical treatment, properly defined patient experience facilitates the design of technologies and activities for comprehensive and balanced high-quality care.

Gerteis et al. [5] point out: "What patients experience, and what they think of that experience, should also matter to healthcare planners, policy makers, and managers, because the experience as much as the technical quality of care, will determine how people use the healthcare system and how they benefit from it." This statement underlines the need for creating a better and shared understanding of what PX is, how it can be studied, measured, and designed.

**Citizens, Customers, Patients, Users**

Patient is an established concept for describing citizens or customers of healthcare services. However, one can argue that not all end-users in healthcare are patients. Patient, citizen, and customer emphasize different viewpoints, but none of them is fully appropriate to describe a user of healthcare – an individual person in the context of receiving healthcare.

A potential user in healthcare is not always in the role of a patient. Sometimes we may talk about customer experience in healthcare [8]. A customer may refer to the selection between different providers (professionals, organizations) based on the available services and intent to pay. On the other hand we may talk about users and user experience in the context of healthcare. This emphasizes the minimum and expected baseline quality requirements where healthcare services are concerned. Both concepts have been elaborated in academic forums. These concepts provide grounding for further elaboration and definition of the "patient experience".

**Experience**

The expression experience is currently used in conjunction with a multitude of contexts. It can be glued to almost everything such as an "amusement park experience", "holiday experience", or even "yoghurt experience" [8]. However, on most occasions a clear definition and breakdown of the concept is not elaborated on further. This leaves room for different and inconsistent interpretations and expands ambiguity on the concept. Not only this ambiguity makes goal-minded, focused and measurable development work difficult but it makes research and development of methods for experience design and engineering problematic.

Oxford Dictionaries [15] provide following definition for experience: an event or occurrence which leaves an impression on someone and feel (an emotion or sensation). This definition emphasizes the impact of an event or occurrence to a person. The activities that surround and involve the person provoke thoughts and feelings that eventually constitute towards a whole experience. In order to enable and support systematic design and engineering of products, activities, situations, and contexts that are capable of producing positive experiences, we need to understand the conceptual building blocks of this experience.

**User Experience (UX)**

During the last decade, user experience (UX) has been under active discussion. The UX White Paper [9] outlines characteristics of UX from different
perspectives. Key characteristics of UX are outlined as follows: UX is ... a subset of experience, related to the experiences of using a system, about encounters with systems, unique to an individual, influenced by prior experiences and expectations, rooted in a social and cultural context. The allaboutux.org website (maintained by the "White Paper" workgroup) lists 27 different definitions about UX covering broad definitions such as Alben's (1996) All the aspects of how people use an interactive product and Nielsen-Norman Group's All aspects of the end-user's interaction with the company, its services, and its products. Some constrained ones are A person's perceptions and responses that result from the use or anticipated use of a product, system or service (ISO 9241-210) and Users' judgement of product quality arising from their experience of interaction, and the product qualities which engender effective use and pleasure (Sutcliffe 2010) [10]. In these definitions UX is about subjective relations and responses towards the system. Some definitions include technologies as part of UX but others leave these out focusing on user's impressions and feelings based on the perception of the systems.

**Patient Experience (PX)**

Some emerging descriptions of the concept PX can be found from the healthcare literature and web sources [13]. The Beryl institute defines PX as "The sum of all interactions shaped by an organization that influence patient perceptions across a continuum of care" [13]. The consulting company Beyond Philosophy explores PX in the following way: "[PX] is a result of the interaction between an organization and a patient as perceived through the patients' conscious and subconscious mind. It is a blend of an organization's rational performance, the senses stimulated and emotions evoked and 


These emerging definitions have not yet been widely adopted and operationalized for empirical context. Additionally, they indicate that PX has a flavour of being a loosely defined service development approach for consulting companies and individual institutes indicating an approach on philosophy of care [11]. In literature PX appears as a not-explicitly defined concept [7], [8].

Patient-centred care provides a viewpoint to PX. It has been described as an approach that consciously adopts the patient’s perspective [5]. During the last decade, patient-centredness has been illustrated in following concepts: consumer health informatics, electronic and mobile health services, pervasive healthcare, patient-centred care, and even citizen empowerment. Further, patient-centred healthcare is comprised of coordination of care, cooperative care and collaboration between patients, clinicians, and other involved parties [2].

Gerteis & al. [5] approach PX as a component of healthcare quality which consists of 1) technical excellence (e.g. the skills and competence of professionals) and 2) subjective experience by patients. Patient’s "perceptions of illness or well-being -- their encounters with healthcare professionals and institutes" addresses PX. Their continuing list of dimensions of patient-centred care illustrate this further: 1) Respect for patients' values, preferences, and expressed needs, 2) Coordination and integration of care, 3) information,
communication and education, 4) physical comfort, 5) emotional support and alleviation of fear and anxiety, 6) involvement of family and friends, and 7) transition and continuity [5].

Conclusion and Discussion
There is a practical need to define PX for the systematic creation of high-quality healthcare services. In addition to currently being a general philosophy-of-care and a development approach, an operationalized definition of PX would help in identifying proper methods, practices, and tools for the development and evaluation of healthcare services. The resulting impression from the interaction with healthcare provider affects the patient’s relation to the services. The impression formulates in patient’s mind in relation to dimensions of patient-centred care such as respect, needs, expectations, preferences, comfort, and emotional support. Unveiling, understanding, and even measuring these responses contribute to the definition of PX and systematic PX design.

References