Understanding why people would give to a health care organization is increasingly important to health care organizations of all sizes as they seek to identify and expand alternative revenue sources that will enable organizational sustainability and progress. Charitable giving to hospitals and health care systems in the United States achieved $10.437 billion in total giving in FY17, according to the “2018 Report on Giving” by the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy. Philanthropy also has an exceptionally strong return on investment of four dollars for each dollar invested in fund development activities, according to AHP. Therefore, optimizing efforts to secure philanthropic investment can have an outsize impact on advancing a nonprofit health care organization’s mission.

Over the last decade, hospitals have increasingly focused on the importance of gratitude experienced by patients and family members as a primary impetus for making a charitable gift. However, quantitative data to support such efforts has been thin. That’s why National Research Corporation/NRC Health and Accordant Philanthropy collaborated on a survey of 24,753 households across the United States regarding past health experiences as well as motivations and considerations behind making a charitable gift to a hospital. This is the largest U.S. survey of gratitude in health care ever conducted. Some of the insights from the study include:

**Motivations to Give**

34% of participants who say they would make a charitable gift to a health care organization, indicate “gratitude” would be their primary motivation for a gift. Other significant responses for motivation to give include “quality of health care services” (24%) and “successful treatment outcomes” (19%).

Despite the popular belief many charitable gifts are motivated by the familiarity or notability of a health care organization or system, only 9% of participants who would give indicate “brand or reputation of the hospital” would be their reason for giving.

**What would most likely MOTIVATE you to make a CHARITABLE GIFT to a hospital?**

- Desire to express gratitude for care
- Quality of health care services
- Successful treatment outcomes
- Being asked to give
- Brand or reputation of the hospital
- Other
Influences on Gratitude

When asked what influenced their feelings of gratitude during a health care experience, 30% of participants say gratitude was spurred by the “compassion, empathy or kindness of caregivers.” Others attribute feelings of gratitude to “outcomes of the procedure / treatment” (23%), “accurate diagnosis” (20%) or “attentiveness to personal / social /emotional needs” (18%).

Similarly, when participants were asked what would most likely make them feel grateful to caregivers, 41% indicate “feeling genuinely cared about as a person” would be the primary motivator of their gratitude. This was followed by “receiving demonstrations of compassion and kindness (14%).

37% of participants who were grateful during their past health care experience say they were most grateful to their physician. However, gratitude was also directed at nurses (31%), other clinical staff (11%) and others.

Reasons to Express Gratitude

Research demonstrates people largely express gratitude for other-centered reasons. 29% of participants indicate expressing gratitude because “it makes me feel good to say thanks,” while 26% of participants indicate expressing gratitude because “it makes other people feel good.” It’s important to note respondents were able to select multiple answers for this survey question.

As the health care philanthropy field deepens its interest in the grateful engagement of patients and family members, there is a tremendous opportunity to leverage not only a vast amount of scientific data on gratitude coming from the fields of both psychology and neuroscience but also to advance more thoughtful inquiry into gratitude in the health care space. Accordant Philanthropy is honored to partner with NRC Health and other partners to continue to provide thought leadership in this important space.