

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A DESCRIPTIVE CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY ON PATIENT SATISFACTION IN A PRIVATE HOSPITAL IN SELANGOR

Narimah AHH¹, Shahril Rizwan O², N Nadhrah NR², Adlina S¹, Hakimi ZA¹ & Nuraliza AS¹

¹ Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

² Medical Students at the Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Teknologi MARA

ABSTRACT

This descriptive cross sectional study was conducted to assess patient's satisfaction by evaluating the waiting time experienced by 27 (54%) inpatients and 23 (46%) outpatients who sought treatment at a private hospital in Selangor from 15th of May 2006 until 3rd of June 2006. Majority of the patients (78%) were in the range between 21 - 40 years old and well-educated. Almost half (48%) were in the human resources employment category, 20% were in administration and marketing and 10% were professionals. Majority of them earned from RM1000-1999 (34%) and RM2000-3999 (32%). Almost all of them (96%) agreed that the medical care that they had been receiving in the hospital was just about perfect. 98% agreed that the doctors treated them in a very friendly and courteous manner and 96% rated the care given by nurses as good/ excellent. 88% to 92% said that their communication with the doctors, nurses and other staff were good/ excellent. 80% waited less than 15 minutes at the registration counter, 52% waited less than 15 minutes to see the doctor and 44% waited less than 15 minutes at other places such as pharmacy and x-ray. Overall, 94% rated the level of services in the hospital as good/ excellent. Almost all (90%) would like to recommend the hospital to their friends and relatives. Our study demonstrated that the majority of the patients were satisfied with the doctors, nurses and environment of the private hospital. The average waiting time of patient before being attended to by a doctor was less than 30 minutes.

Key words: Patient - satisfaction, private hospital, Selangor

INTRODUCTION

The assessment of patient satisfaction is an important way to monitor quality of care in a hospital. A few aspects of satisfaction include the perceived quality of care, the attitude of health workers including the medical staff's interest in the patient's problems, the time spent by the doctor with the patient and the waiting time before entering the examination room.

Various criteria of patient satisfaction have been identified including responsiveness, communication, attitude, clinical skills, comforting skills, amenities and food service¹⁻⁵. Previous studies have reported that patient's characteristics such as age and education may influence a patient's assessment of hospital performance^{1,6-7}. In the different setting of health care services (inpatient care, outpatient surgery, outpatient test/treatment and emergency care), the compassionate patient care including personal attention, respect and comfort were the most important factors influencing a patient's intention to return or to recommend the same provider in the future^{1,8}.

This study was conducted to determine patient satisfaction towards the staff, the surroundings and waiting times in the private hospital. It also looked at suggestions by the patients as a way to improve the current services of the hospital.

SETTING

The hospital chosen in this study is a 63 bed private medical centre providing tertiary care in Selangor and areas in close proximity for inpatients and outpatients. It offers a wide range of medical, surgical, and emergency services 24 hours a day. It is designated to meet the need for specialist medical services at reasonable cost.

The medical centre was incorporated in 2003 with the principle objective being to provide an accessible, affordable and acceptable tertiary health care for the people. It provides a one stop comprehensive patient care service supported by diagnostic radiology and clinical laboratory facilities. It is supported by well equipped modern facilities in order to achieve excellence in their services. The name of the hospital will not be revealed for reasons of confidentiality.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted at a private hospital in Selangor from May to June 2006 to assess patient's satisfaction towards the staff, namely the doctors and the nurses, and clinical surroundings. It also evaluated the average waiting time in the private hospital for both outpatients and inpatients.

A structured interviewer administered questionnaire was given out using systematic sampling to both in- and outpatients. The first patient was chosen at random follow by systematic sampling of the alternative number after the first. 27 questionnaires were given to patients in the ward and 23 questionnaires were given to outpatients after receiving treatment. Included in the questionnaire were issues on the attitude of the doctors and nurses, the clinical surroundings of the hospital and the waiting times. This structured questionnaire was compiled from questionnaires used by other researchers available from the internet and published papers⁹⁻¹². A section on comments and suggestions by the patients in ways to improve the existing facilities was also included.

The results and discussions forwarded here are limited and cannot be generalized to other private or public hospitals. This is because the number of patients could not be extended beyond 50 respondents because of the shortage of time. However this study does gives some indication as to the aspects of patient satisfaction that has to be considered in future studies.

The comments and suggestions were collected and analyzed using SPSS version 13.0. The results are presented in the form of frequency tables and charts.

RESULTS

Data collection involved 50 patients who sought for treatment in the private hospital from 15th of May 2006 until 3rd of June 2006 where 27 (54%) were inpatients and 23 (46%) were outpatients.

Table 1 shows the distribution of patients' race, age, educational level, occupational and monthly income. All the patients in this study were Malay, between 18 to 60 years. Majority of them (44%) were in the range of 21 to 40 years old. For the level of education, majority of them were well-educated. More than half (62%) were educated up to secondary school and 32% graduated from college or university. Only 4% were educated up to primary school and 2% did not receive any schooling. Half of them (48%) were in the human resource and employment categories (operator, technician, supervisor, contract worker, factory worker, skill worker and others), 20% were in administration and marketing and 10% were professionals (engineer, health care providers and educationist).

Table 1. Distribution of social demographic data

Race	
● Malay	100 %
Age	
● 11 - 20	2%
● 21 - 30	44%
● 31 - 40	34%
● 41 - 50	14%
● 51 - 60	6%
Educational level	
● College or university	32%
● Secondary school	62%
● Primary school and	4%
● Did not receive schooling	2%
Occupation	
● Professional	10%
● Human resource	48%
● Administration and marketing	20%
● Student	6%
● Not working	16%
Monthly income	
● < 500	4%
● 500 - < 1000	24%
● 1000 - < 2000	34%
● 2000 - < 4000	32%
● > 4000	6%

Another 16% were not working and 6% were students. One third (34%) earned about RM1000 to < 1999, another 32% earned about RM2000 to < 3999 and 24% earned about RM500 to < 999 per month.

Table 2 show that almost all patients (96%) agreed that the medical care received in the hospital was just about perfect and 78% disagreed that they were dissatisfied with some of the things regarding the medical care they received from the hospital.

Table 3 show that a total of 70% of the patients agreed that the hospital had everything needed to provide for a complete medical care and 64% were sure that the doctor's diagnosis was correct. Almost all of them (90%) agreed that those who provided the medical care in the hospital were careful to check everything when treating and examining them and 78% had no doubts about the ability of the doctors who treated them.

Table 2. General satisfaction

	Percent (%)				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain disagree	Disagree	Strongly
The medical care received is just about perfect	20	76	2	0	2
I am dissatisfied with some of the things regarding the medical care that I received	6	6	10	72	6

Table 3. Technical quality

	Strongly agree	Agree	Percent (%)		
			Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I think the hospital had everything needed to provide for a complete medical care	10	60	26	4	0
Sometimes doctors make me wonder if their diagnosis is correct	4	14	18	58	6
They were careful to check everything when treating and examining me	18	72	4	4	2
I had some doubts about the ability of the doctors who treated me	0	8	14	74	4

Table 4. Interpersonal manner

	Strongly agree	Agree	Percent (%)		
			Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Doctors acted too businesslike and impersonal toward me	0	4	8	76	12
My doctors treated me in a very friendly and courteous manner	24	74	2	0	0

Majority of the patients (88%) disagreed that the doctors were too businesslike and impersonal toward them and 98% agreed that the doctors treated them in a very friendly and courteous manner (Table 4).

Graph 1 shows the rating of care given by the nurses to the patients. Almost all of them (96%) rated that the care given by the nurses was good/ excellent and 94% agreed that the staff were cheerful and courteous in carrying out their duties.

Table 5 shows that almost all of the patients (94%) agreed that the doctors were good in explaining the reasons for conducting medical tests and 84% disagreed that the doctors sometimes ignored what they told them.

Graph 1. The rating of care given by the nurses

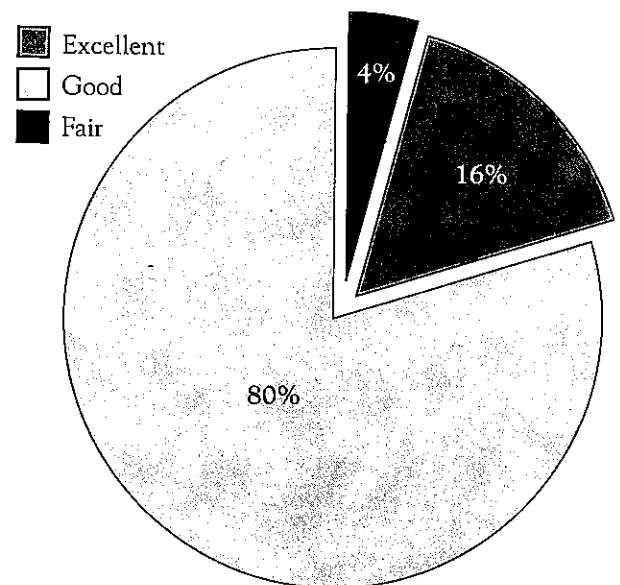
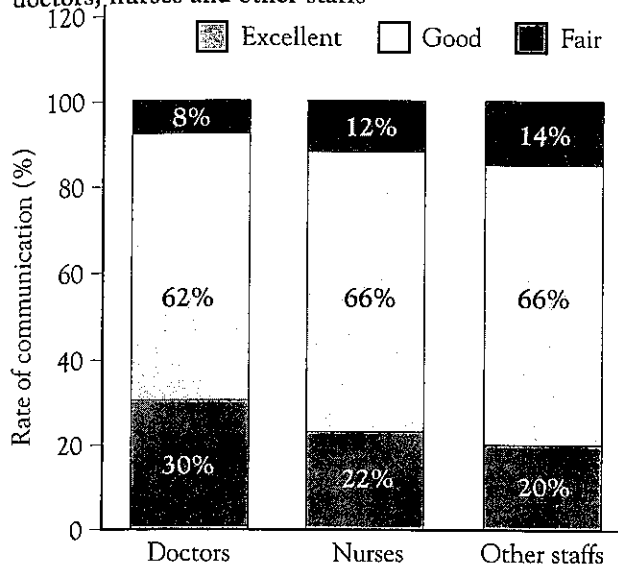


Table 5. Communication

	Strongly agree	Agree	Percent (%)		
			Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Doctors were good in explaining the reasons for conducting medical tests	26	68	4	2	0
Doctors sometimes ignored what I told them	0	2	14	74	10

Graph 2. The rating of patients' communication with doctors, nurses and other staffs



Graph 2 shows that more than half of the patients (62% to 66%) said that their communication with the doctors, nurses and other staff were good, while another 20% to 30% said they were excellent.

Half of the patients (52%) felt confident to receive the medical care without being set back financially and 52% were uncertain if they have to pay more of their medical care than they can afford (Table 6).

Table 6. Financial aspects

	Percent (%)				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I felt confident that I can receive the medical care needed without being set back financially	4	48	44	4	0
I had to pay more of my medical care than I can afford	2	12	52	0	34

Table 7. Time spent with doctors

	Percent (%)				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Those who provided the medical care sometimes hurry too much when they treated me	2	6	10	80	2
Doctors usually spend plenty of time with me	2	60	20	16	2

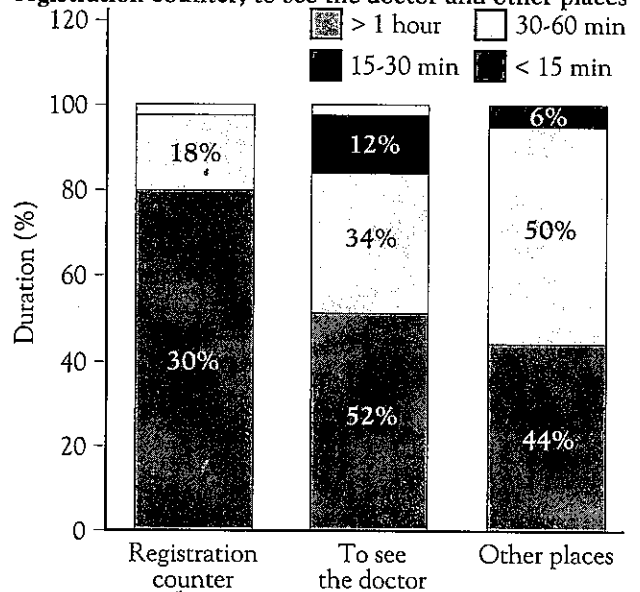
Table 8. Accessibility and convenience

	Percent (%)				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I had easy access to the medical specialists	2	80	16	2	0

Majority of the patients (82%) disagreed that those who provided their medical care sometimes hurry too much when treating them and 62% agreed that the doctors usually spend plenty of time with them (Table 7).

Majority of the patients (82%) agreed that they have easy access to see the medical specialist. Only 2% disagreed while another 16% were uncertain (Table 8) and 84% also said that they do not have to wait for long time for treatment (data not shown).

Graph 3. The duration of patients' waiting time at the registration counter, to see the doctor and other places



Majority of the patients (80%) waited less than 15 minutes at the registration counter while 18% waited between 15 to 30 minutes, 52% waited less than 15 minutes to see the doctor and 34% waited between 15 to 30 minutes and 44% waited less than 15 minutes at other places such as pharmacy and x-ray, while another half of them waited between 15 to 30 minutes (Graph 3). More than half of them (68%) did not find that it hard to get an appointment for medical care right away and 84% agreed that they were able to receive medical care whenever they need it.

Overall, 94% of the patients rated the level of services in the hospital were good/ excellent. Almost all of them (90%) would recommend the hospital to their friends and relatives.

Table 9 shows the conditions of facilities and auxiliary services answered by inpatients only. Majority of the patients (93%) rated their room as good/ excellent. 86% rated the facilities in their room as good/ excellent. 79% rated the meals served during their stay as good/ excellent and 100% rated the general cleanliness of their room as good/ excellent.

Table 9. Facilities and auxiliary services

	Percent (%)			
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Did you find your room comfortable?	19	74	4	4
Were the facilities in your room in good working condition?	19	67	7	7
How would you rate the meals served to you during your stay?	19	60	19	4
Was the general cleanliness of your room adequate?	22	78	0	0

DISCUSSION

The study was divided into two parts where the first part contained the age of the patient, level of education, occupation and family income. This part was conducted to determine the sociodemographic type of persons who frequented private hospitals for treatment. The second part was conducted to assess the patient satisfaction and waiting time in the private hospital for both inpatient and outpatient which included general satisfaction, technical quality, interpersonal manner, communication, financial aspects, time spent with doctors, accessibility and convenience, facilities, auxiliary services and general feedback.

General satisfaction, service and communication skills
 Almost all patients were satisfied with the services (96%) and technical qualities in the hospital especially with the doctors' credibility (78%). Almost all were satisfied with the interpersonal (94% to 98%) and communication skills (88% to 92%) of the health care providers. Thus, we can conclude that majority of patients were satisfied with the attitudes and behaviors of the doctors, nurses and other staff. A nationwide study at accredited teaching hospitals in Taiwan reported that technical competency as the most influential predictor for recommendation for patients undergoing treatment for stroke, diabetes mellitus, Caesarean section and appendectomy¹³. A recent study reported that interpersonal skills measured by doctors' explanation, attitude and caring were as or more influential than clinical competency on patient satisfaction¹³. Another study reported that patients expressed greater confidence in the skill and information

provided by the staff in the private hospitals, and they considered the physicians and nurses at private hospital to be more helpful and pleasant in their attitude compared to public hospitals¹⁴. A patient satisfaction survey in Hong Kong public hospitals reported that communication skills workshops conducted among emergency department doctors can improved their communication skills with a corresponding increased in patient satisfaction and reduction of complaints¹⁵.

Financial aspects

In the financial aspects, half of the patients (52%) felt confident to receive the care because the hospital was listed as their panel hospital.

Time spent with doctors, accessibility and convenient

More than half of the patients (62%) were satisfied with the careful treatment and duration of time to discuss their problems with the doctors. Majority (82% to 84%) said that they have easy access to medical specialist they need and do not have to wait for long time for treatment. Majority waited less than 15 minutes at the registration counter (80%), to see the doctor (52%) and other places such as pharmacy and x-ray (44%). From the above result, majority of the patients did not have to wait for a long period of time to get medical treatment and this may be due to a well-organized system. Overall, 94% of the patients rated the level of services in the hospital as good/ excellent and they would recommend the hospital to their friends and relatives. A study in a primary care nurse managed clinic in Houston, reported that the mean time interval from arrival in clinic to being placed in an examination room was 13.75 minutes. The nurse

practitioners spent an average of 22.8 minutes with each patient and the patients were in and out of clinic in 49.05 minutes¹⁶. Another study in a teaching hospital in Nigeria stated that the total waiting time for a dispensing process average is 17.09 minutes. The major delay components included patient queues for billing prescription sheets and subsequent payment to the cashier¹⁷. It was noted that the fewer numbers of patient in this private hospital gave doctors more time to communicate with their patients. They could therefore discuss, explain and treat the patient more thoroughly. Comparatively in a government hospital the doctors are overburdened with the workload due to overflow of patients thus they miss out on fundamental aspects of the patient treatment.

Facilities auxiliary services

For the facilities and auxiliary services, the questions were answered by inpatients only. Majority of the patients were satisfied with the condition (93%), facilities (86%) and cleanliness (100%) in the ward and rated the meals served as good/ excellent (79%). This may be due to the privacy and conducive environment provided by the hospital.

CONCLUSION

This study in assessing patient satisfaction and waiting times in the private hospital has managed to bring out certain issues and constructive comments/suggestions in ways to improve the existing centre.

From the data presented, majority of the patients were satisfied with the doctors, nurses and clinical surrounding of the private hospital. The average waiting time of patient before being attended to by a doctor was less than 30 minutes.

The results of this study revealed that patient satisfaction is determined by several factors such as communication between the doctor and patient, doctor's attitude, hospital staff and environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank Maslina Ibrahim (Executive Director), Wan Hasniza Wan Ismail (Human Resource Executive), Dr Zulkarnain A. Hamidy (Medical Specialist), Dr Mohd. Nazir Abu Bakar (Paediatrician), Dr Kamsuraini Ibrahim (Obstetrician & Gynaecologist), Dr A. Shukor Md. Noh (Surgeon) and Dr Ariff Sukimin Shukri (Orthopedic Surgeon) for their professional assistance.

REFERENCES

1. Cheng SH, Yang MC, Chiang TL. Patient satisfaction with and recommendation of a hospital: effects of interpersonal and technical aspects of hospital care. *Int J Qual Health Care* 2003; 15(4): 345-355.
2. Rubin HR. Can patients evaluate the quality of hospital care? *Med Care Med* 1990; 47: 267-326.
3. Carey RG, Seibert JH. A patient survey system to measure quality improvement: Questionnaire reliability and validity. *Med Care* 1993; 31: 834-845.
4. Cleary PD, Edgman-Levitan S, Roberts M et al (1991). Patients evaluate their hospital care: A national survey. *Health Aff* 1991; 10: 254-267.
5. Rubin HR, Ware JE, Hays RD. The Patients Judgments of Hospital Quality (PJHQ) questionnaire. *Med Care* 1990; 28(suppl): S22-S29.
6. Hall JA, Dornan MC. Patient socio-demographic characteristics as predictors of satisfaction with medical care: a meta analysis. *Soc Sci Med* 1990; 30: 811-818.
7. Hargraves JL, Wilson IB, Zaslavsky A et al. Adjusting for patient characteristics when analyzing reports from patients about hospital care. *Med Care* 2001; 39: 635-641.
8. Burroughs TE, Davies AR, Cira JC, Dunagan WC. Understanding patient willingness to recommend and return: A strategy for prioritizing improvement opportunities. *J Comm Improv* 1999; 25: 271-287.
9. Ramanathan G, Abdullah N. Patient satisfaction and waiting time at the Patient Admission Centre, Kuala Lumpur Hospital. *J Qual Improv* 1998; 2(1).
10. Marshall GN, Hays RD (1994). The Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire Short-form (PSQ-18), P-7865. The RAND Corporation. Available from <http://www.rand.org> (assessed from 1 May 2006).
11. Ware JE, Synder MK, Wright WR (1976). Development and validation of scales to measure patient satisfaction with the medical care services. Vol.1, Part A: Review of literature, overview of methods and results regarding construction of scales. (NTIS Publication No. PB-288-329). Springfield, VA. National Technical Information Service.
12. Short-Form Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ 18). Available from <http://www.rand.org/health/surveys/PSQ18.html> (assessed from 1 May 2006).

13. Cheng SH, Yang MC, Chiang TL. Patient satisfaction with and recommendation of a hospital: effects of interpersonal and technical aspects of hospital care. *Int J Quality in Health Care* 2003; 15(4): 345-355.
14. Tengilimoglu D *et al.* Patient satisfaction in Turkey: Differences between public and with private hospitals. *J Community Health* 1999; 24(1): 73-91.
15. Lau FL. Can communication skills workshops for emergency department doctors improve patient satisfaction? *J Accid Emerg Med* 2000; 17: 251-253.
16. Mackey TA, Cole FL. Patient waiting times in a nurse managed clinic. *Internet J Advanced Nurs Pract* 1997; 1(1).
17. Afolabi MO, Erhun WO. Patient's response to waiting time in an out-patient pharmacy in Nigeria. *Tropical J Pharmaceutical Research* 2003; 2(2): 207-214.