



A STUDY ON SATISFACTION LEVEL AMONG PATIENTS ATTENDED PRIMARY HEALTH CENTERS IN NORTH TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Patient satisfaction is an important tool to assess the services offered and delivered by the health care setup. It depends on quality of clinical services provided, availability of medicine, behavior of doctor and other health staff, cost of services, hospital infrastructure, physical comfort, emotional support and respect for patient preferences. Though majority of our population are using public health sector, the effectiveness and quality of services at these centers needs to be measured frequently so that a domesticated and localized healthcare plan could be developed. **Objective:** To assess the satisfaction level among patients attended primary health centers. **Methodology:** A cross-sectional study was conducted in rural areas among patients who have attended primary health centers in North Tamil Nadu, with a pre-designed questionnaire, during 2021. Information regarding patients' satisfaction related to services offered at these centers, response of the healthcare providers and quality of care were obtained. Data was entered and analyzed in Microsoft excel for windows. **Results:** The mean age of patients was 46.4 years. 90.5% patients were satisfied with the location of the primary health centers. Majority of the patients were satisfied with the services provided in the primary health center. The mean waiting period was 31.2 minutes. 45% patients were not satisfied due to overcrowding. 40% patients felt that the physicians had not explained about their illness properly. 45% patients felt that they didn't receive proper advices on preventing similar illness in future. 80 % patients were satisfied with the treatment offered in the PHCs. Mean satisfaction was found to be 81.5%. **Conclusion:** Most of the patients were found to be satisfied, yet there were some shortcomings in the quality of care. Inadequate staff and overcrowding were foremost reasons.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

Patient satisfaction is considered as one of the desired outcome of healthcare, and it is directly related to utilization of health services. Measurement of patient satisfaction involves multi-dimensional aspects of patients' opinion on healthcare, identifying problems in healthcare, and evaluation of healthcare (1). Healthcare in India has seen many changes over the years. The objectives of healthcare changed with the requirements of society and the availability of resources and technology. The WHO Conference on supporting Health for all, held in 1990, defined future development in health to be human centered. A lot of stress has been made for investment in health, patient care and patient's right for delivery of quality healthcare leading to patient satisfaction (2).

Accessibility is one of the principles of Health for All, as stated in Alma Ata declaration on Primary health care. Though, large catchment area of tertiary health facilities make it less accessible, people travel for more than an hour to receive specialized services⁽³⁾. Quality of service means inexpensive type of service with minimum side effects that can cure or relieve the health problems⁽⁴⁾. It is easier to evaluate the patients' satisfaction towards the services than evaluate the quality of medical services that they receive.

Patient satisfaction related to healthcare services largely determines their compliance with the treatment and thus contributes to the positive influence on health. Primary health care is the basic level of health care a patient can approach. This study was therefore undertaken with the aim to find out satisfaction of patients attending OPD related to different parameters of healthcare including quality of care at Primary health facilities in North Tamilnadu.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

To assess the satisfaction level among patients attended primary health centers

METHODOLOGY

The present cross-sectional study was conducted among patients who have attended primary health centers in North Tamil Nadu.

Study design: The study was conducted in rural areas in Dharmapuri district in North Tamilnadu. By Simple random sampling method people who have the outpatient department of Primary health centers were involved.

Data Collection Procedure: Data was collected by trained

investigator during the year 2021. Satisfaction of patients attending outpatient department in primary health centers was assessed by pre-designed and pre-tested proforma. A total of 200 outpatients were interviewed during the study period considering available resource and time. Anonymity was maintained by not including the name of the patients in the proforma.

Statistical Analysis: The data was analyzed using Microsoft excel for windows. Patient satisfaction was expressed in percentages.

RESULTS

In the present study, 181 (91.5%) outpatient attendees were satisfied with the location of the primary health centre, and 135 (67.5%) outpatients were satisfied with the waiting period at these centers. 180 (90%) attendees were satisfied with the toilet facility in the PHCs; whereas, 90 (45%) attendees reported overcrowding in these PHCs, and 40 (20%) reported about unavailability of safe drinking water. (Table 1)

Table 1: Patient Satisfaction Towards Services Offered At PHC

Indicators	Satisfied (%)	Not satisfied (%)
Location of the PHC	181 (90.5)	19 (9.5)
Comfort in sitting area	188 (94)	12 (6)
Waiting period	135 (67.5)	65 (33.5)
Cleanliness of the PHC	162 (81)	38 (19)
Overcrowding in the PHC	110 (55)	90 (45)
Usefulness of IEC materials	154 (77)	46 (23)
Availability of safe drinking water	160 (80)	40 (20)
Availability of toilet facilities	180 (90)	20 (10)
Cleanliness of toilets in PHC	128 (64)	72 (36)

162 (81%) patients were satisfied with the attitude of the PHC staff, another 72.5% reported that the doctors had examined them as per their complaints, and 120 (60%) patients said that doctors had explained about their illness. Majority (80%) of the patients were satisfied with the treatment offered in these PHCs (Table 2).

Table 2: Patient Satisfaction Towards Response Of The Staff At PHC

Response by PHC Staff	Satisfied (%)	Not satisfied (%)
Attitude of PHC staff	162 (81)	38 (19)
Examination by doctor	145 (72.5)	55 (27.5)
Doctor explained about illness	120 (60)	80 (40)
Treatment offered at PHC	160 (80)	40 (20)
Advice on prevention of similar illness	110 (90)	90 (45)

Regarding quality of care, it was observed that 180 (90%) patients were satisfied with the quantity of drugs given at PHCs, and 174 (87%) patients were satisfied with the quality of drugs. 83.5% patients understood about the timings of medications, and 87% patients were satisfied with the timing of PHCs. (Table 3)

Table 3: Patient Satisfaction Regarding Quality Of Care At PHC

Quality of care	Satisfied (%)	Not satisfied (%)
Access to PHC for all types of illness	178 (89)	22 (11)
Consultation timing of PHC	174 (87)	26 (13)
Quantity of drugs	180 (90)	20 (10)
Quality of drugs	174 (87)	26 (13)
Understood about timing of medications	167 (83.5)	33 (16.5)

DISCUSSION

Patient satisfaction is an important measure of healthcare. Limited literature on this issue makes it difficult to compare present study findings in Indian scenario. Our study findings may be useful in identifying gaps in healthcare delivery at primary health center level, especially in south India. The overall satisfaction of the outpatients was found to be good, which is consistent with study conducted in Lucknow by Kumari et al. (5) Enquiries about the waiting area and waiting period in the public health facilities also revealed a high level of satisfaction in both the studies. (5) They also documented that the accessibility to the PHC was satisfactory (88.3%) which is similar to our study findings (90.5%).

Differences in satisfaction in terms of long waiting time, in studies conducted by Van Uden et al (6) and Mahfouz et al (7) could be attributed to the differences in expectations of the people in those study areas. In study conducted by Sodani et al, (8) satisfaction towards availability of toilets was 44%, which is less than our finding (90%). In the same study, satisfaction towards quality of drugs offered in the PHCs was only 3%, whereas, it was 87% in the present study.

In studies conducted by Kumari et al (5) and Galhotra et al, (9) the satisfaction towards doctor- patient relationship was found to be 60.5% and 65% respectively, which is similar to our study (60%). The satisfaction towards behaviour of the health staff was found to be 82% and 78.3% respectively by Kumari et al (5) and Sodani et al, (8) which are similar to our study (81%). Our findings regarding satisfaction related to examination of patients (72.5%) corroborate with Kersnik et al, (10) who observed satisfaction among 75.3% patients.

In another study conducted by Chandwani, (11) 62% of the attendees of primary health centres were satisfied with the availability of drugs, compared to 90% in the present study. In the same study satisfaction towards the health information was found to be 69.6% which is similar to our findings (77%). Improvement in the doctor-patient communication skill and other relevant areas would go a long way to enhance the level of satisfaction of the outpatients, considering the fact that most of the patients are drawn to the health facility out of their faith in the existing health system.

CONCLUSION

Most of the outpatients were satisfied with services offered at the PHCs, yet there were some shortfalls in the quality of care at these centers. Some concerns were about Overcrowding in the PHC and inadequate explanation by doctors about current illness and advice on preventing similar episodes of illness in future.

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