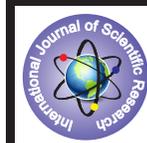


Waiting Time Analysis of Outpatient Department at Gmers Medical College Hospital Valsad



Management

KEYWORDS : Waiting Time, Central Registration, Queue, Laboratory Registration, Waiting Area

Varun Virmani	Assistant Hospital Administrator, GMERS Medical College, Halar Road, Nanakwada, Valsad, Gujarat- 396001
Dr. Anupam Kumar Bansal	Assistant Professor. Dept. of Forensic Medicine, GMERS Medical College Valsad, Gujarat- 396001
Dr. D P Pandit	Professor, Physiology, GMERS Medical College Valsad, Gujarat- 396001
Dr. Deepak S Howale	Professor & Head, Anatomy, GMERS Medical College Valsad

ABSTRACT

The main objectives of the Out-patient department of a hospital should include the reduction of patients' waiting time in the system, improvement on the services given, and better resource utilization. This study is carried out for GMERS Medical College Valsad where the outpatient department serves 600 patients daily. The objective of the study is to find the waiting time and find the factors responsible. The sample size of the study is 124 which include patients coming to the outpatient department of the hospital and the staff of the hospital. Out of 124 samples 100 are the patients and 24 are the staff at registration, laboratory, pharmacy and radiology department of the hospital. The analysis is done using Microsoft Excel and found that the patients at the central registration counter, laboratory registration and radiology registration counter has to wait for long. Waiting time at pharmacy is less. In spite of infrastructural constraints the waiting time can be reduced to the large extent for which suggestions are given in the study.

INTRODUCTION:

Outpatient service is the most important service provided by all the hospitals as it is the point of contact between a hospital and the community. It is an ambulatory care centre which provides to all members of a community the whole scope of services that are needed to keep them in good state of health directly or by referral to more qualified institutions. OPD in a hospital serves the facility for diagnosis and treatment of patients. Many patients gain their first impression of the hospital from the OPD. In other words, the first impression will have lasting effects. A well managed, neat and clean hospital with necessary information boards and proper directions generally provide good image. Successful and efficient management of OPD can lighten the burden on the patient wards.

Nowadays OPD services of the majority of hospitals are having queuing and waiting time problem. Patients' waiting time refers to the time from the registration of the patient for appointment with doctor till they enter the doctor's chamber to the laboratory, Radiology and finally Pharmacy department.

Various functions affecting the services of an OPD are:

- The patients' arrival pattern at the central waiting room.
- Time of services given at various clinics of OPD.
- Queue lengths at waiting rooms of clinics of OPD.

Since the numbers of patients are large and the treatment should be given within a day the bottlenecks occurred with respect to these constraints can be solved by an effective management design.

Common problems to be encountered in OPD system are as follows:³

- Patients waiting time occur long at the front desk of the hospital.
- Patients might be conveyed to wrong services
- Large number of patients waiting to be served at the OPD will result in uncomfortable conditions such as congestion, noise, and poor ventilation.
- Number of patients admitted within a working day will cause overtime for doctors.

Thus, the main objectives of the Out-patient department of a hospital should include the reduction of patients' time in the

system, improvement on the services given, and better resource utilization.

This study throws light into finding out the various problems hindering the functions of the OPD at GMERS Medical College Hospital Valsad, factors responsible for increase in waiting time for the patients and ways to meet the expectations and needs of patients who walk into the OPD and helps the hospital management to gain insight into how the services should be designed and delivered to satisfy and retain them.

ABOUT GMERS MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL VALSAD

GMERS Medical College Hospital Valsad is an institute managed by Gujarat Medical Education and Research Society and is affiliated to Veer Narmad South Gujarat University. The Hospital is 300 bedded with average OPD of 600 per day and 80% bed occupancy.

Patients visiting the OPD constitute mostly of middle age, 61% of the OPD patients are female patients and 59% of the patients completed their primary level education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To identify the average time spent by the patient in the OPD.
2. If the waiting time is high, then identify the factors those are responsible for high waiting time in the OPD.
3. To recommend appropriate suggestions to optimize the waiting time in OPD.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

OPD services are most important services provided by all the hospitals as it provides service to a large number of patients at a low cost. There is increasing concern to improve the quality of administration in the hospitals to meet the rising expectations of people. Apart from the quality of staff, equipments the main feelings and image carried by patients about hospital mainly depends on human aspect and the concern, sympathy and understanding shown by hospital staff. This study is mainly based on the reducing of waiting time of patients in the outpatient department at GMERS Medical College Hospital Valsad. This study can be carried out in any type of healthcare setup. It may be hospitals, health centers, clinics or nursing homes etc.²

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on data collected through questionnaires

at the outpatient department of the hospital during the period of 2 months. The method of data collection is firstly, the collection of primary data through questionnaires, secondly, collection of secondary data from hospital database and thirdly, by observing the patient from entry to exit of the hospital and observing the staff at registration, laboratory and radiology department.

The sample size of the study is 124 which include patients coming to the outpatient department of the hospital and the staff of the hospital. Out of 124 samples 100 are the patients and 24 are the staff at registration, laboratory, pharmacy and radiology department of the hospital.

100 patients from 10 different departments were selected randomly, 80 patients were given the questionnaire and 20 patients were observed from entry to exit of the hospital.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In the present study, attempt has been made to determine the flow of patient and the average time spent by the patients in the OPD. To identify the factors those are responsible for high waiting time in the OPD and recommend appropriate suggestions to optimize the waiting time in order to retain the patients. Interpretation of data has been done from the patients view as well as from the view point of staff that directly come in contact with patients.

As the first point of contact with the hospital is central registration counter, study shows that 32% patients wait for approximately more than 20 minutes at the registration counter and it was observed that longest queue were seen during 8 am to 10 am at the counter.

When patient visit the consultant after it was found that 33% patients have to wait for more than 20 minutes and 14 % patients have to wait for 15 to 20 minutes outside the consultation room and it was observed that the waiting time is more outside the medicine, surgery and gynecology consultation rooms.

32% of the patients were referred for laboratory investigation and the study shows that 59% of the patients stand in a queue for more than 20 minutes for laboratory registration and get the report after approximately after 5 hours of sample collection.

17% of the patients were referred for radiology investigation out of which 53% patients had to wait for more than 5 minutes and for the cash payment for radiology investigation approximately 30% patients had to sand in a queue for more than 5 minutes.

For collection of X Ray reports 47% of the patients get the report within 2 hours and for sonography all the reports are issued within 15 minutes.

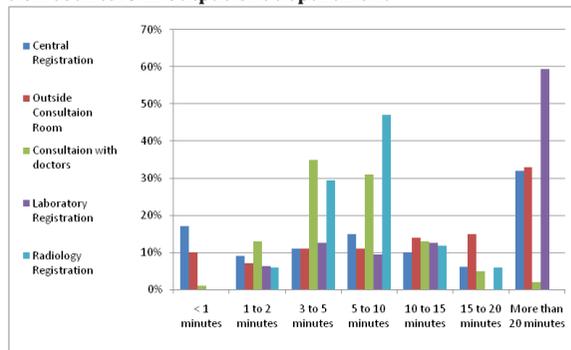
98 % patients went to the pharmacy out of which 58 % had to spend less than 3 minutes at the pharmacy counter.

Data collected from staff of registration counter shows that 75% of the patients are registered within 1 minute and 1-2 minutes are taken for remaining 25% patients for registration. About the follow up patients every patient is registered with in 1 minute.

The cash collection process takes 1-2 minutes for 75% patients and 3-5 minutes for 25% patients.

For laboratory collection 3-5 minutes are taken for 62.50% of patients and more than 5 minutes are taken for 6.25% of patients.

Chart showing time spent by patients at different registration counters in outpatient department



FINDING

Patients of every age group are visiting the outpatient department of hospital.

Female patients are visiting more not only to the gynecology but also to the medicine department.

Most of the patients coming to the OPD had completed the primary level education and are aware about the healthcare facilities.

Numbers of registration counters are insufficient looking at the daily patient flow.

After registration for laboratory the patient had to again to central cash counter which increase the waiting time.

As some laboratory investigation a report taking more than 5 hours patients have to again visit the hospital next day for consultation.

For radiology investigation cash payment, patient has to go to the central cash counter.

The peak time when the counters are overcrowded is as follows:

- 8:00 am to 9:00 am for central registration counters.
- 9:00am to 11:00 am outside the consultation room.
- 10:00 am to 12:00 noon at the laboratory
- 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at pharmacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the time taken for registration is less than 1 minute per patient and lack of space for expansion, the number allotment system can be introduced which allows the patient to relax in waiting area and reach the registration as per the turn.

During the peak two hours the IPD counter can be converted to OPD counter.

Cash for laboratory investigation can be collected at the laboratory registration counter itself.

Cash of radiology investigation can also be collected at radiology registration counter which will reduce the waiting time definitely.

The security staff around the registration counter should guide the patients regarding the counters and guards must be trained for the same.

Regular training sessions should be conducted for all the staff.

CONCLUSION:-

Patients coming to the hospital if satisfied will help in developing the good image of the institute and waiting time is one of the important indicator of patient satisfaction.

Patients seems to be satisfied with the services provided by the

doctors, behavior of staff etc. but because of infrastructural constraints waiting area cannot be increased, registration counters cannot be increased which is affecting the patient satisfaction.

As GMERS Medical College Hospital Valsad is coming up with the new hospital building, infrastructural issues can be taken care during the planning and development stage.

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