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CONSEQUENCES OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY AMONG EMERGENCY ROOM PATIENTS

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ABSTRACT:

Objective: To study the consequences of a medical emergency among Emergency Room patients, at a teaching hospital in Karachi, Pakistan.

Design: A questionnaire-based survey

Settings: Emergency Room of Aga Khan University Hospital in Karachi, Pakistan.

Main outcome measures: Consequences of a medical emergency in terms of impact on employment, financial position, family life, social life, recreational life, self-confidence and psyche.

Results: A hundred patients were surveyed. Emergency Room patients feel that they will not have a major impact on their job or employment, as a result of the medical emergency but it will have adverse financial consequences. The respondents in our study perceive the consequence of the medical emergency to have a variable impact on their family life, social life, recreation life and self-confidence. It is important to note with concern that a major impact on "Psyche" is expected by the emergency room patients, as a result of a medical emergency

Conclusion: We have documented the consequences of a medical emergency among Emergency Room patients, with implications for medical practice and policy makers on health.

KEY-WORDS: Emergency Medicine-Impact-Adverse effects.

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INTRODUCTION

Medical emergency is an unexpected and an extremely unpleasant event in the life of a person. It is common knowledge that a medical emergency presents unexpectedly and can have far reaching adverse consequences for the patient. The volume of patients requiring emergency medical care is high¹. A lot of work has been done on medical emergency^{2,3}, but information is lacking on the repercussions of a medical emergency for a patient and its impact on his or her future life.

Loss of work capacity through illness or injury and its impact on employment⁴ has been studied but there is insufficient data relating to a medical emergency and its impact on employment. Similarly information is lacking on the consequences of a medical emergency on the family, social and recreational life of the

patient. There is a need to study the impact on the confidence and psyche of the patient of such a medical emergency. Information on the possible consequences of a medical emergency on a patient and their life can help us to devise ways so as to lessen the adverse impact.

Therefore, a need was established to study the consequences of a medical emergency on patients.

PATIENTS AND METHOD

A questionnaire was developed in keeping with the study objectives and included the

TABLE-I
Demographic profile of the patients
(n=100)

<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Number (Percent)</i>
SEX:	
Males	54 (54)
Females	46 (46)
Mean Age (SD*) (In years)	42.72 (17.39)
Marital Status:	
Single	22 (22)
Married	75 (75)
Divorced	02 (02)
Widow	01(01)
Educational Status:	
Illiterate	07(07)
Primary	05(05)
Matriculation	15(15)
Intermediate	32(32)
Graduate	36(36)
Post-graduate	05(05)
Occupational status:	
Unemployed	06(06)
Self employed	14(14)
Private service	18(18)
Government service	05(05)
Housewife	35(35)
Student	10(10)
Retired	12(12)

* Standard deviation

demographic profile of the respondents. It was administered to Emergency Room patients at Aga Khan University Hospital, which is a tertiary level teaching hospital in Karachi. About a hundred emergency patients are seen daily at the facility.

It was a cross sectional survey of Emergency Room patients. The questionnaire was used to collect patient's consequences of the medical emergency and was administered by the investigators of the study.

Written consent was taken from those participating in the study after providing them assurance on confidentiality. Epi-info and SPSS computer software were used for the data management.

RESULTS

A total of hundred Emergency Room patients were surveyed. The demographic profile of the respondents is listed in Table-I. Consequences of the medical emergency for the patients are listed in Table-II.

Biggest loss due to the medical emergency, in view of the emergency room patients, was on health, finance, job, and family life among 46(46%), 33(33%), 11(11%) and 06(06%) respondents respectively.

TABLE-II
Consequences of a medical emergency for patients
(n=100)

<i>Adverse impact on</i>	<i>Patient's score*</i>				
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Job	61	09	18	03	09
Family life	13	42	23	10	12
Social life	07	47	35	11	-
Finance	33	20	11	22	14
Recreational life	01	39	43	11	06
Self-Confidence	03	18	39	28	12
Psyche	02	22	15	51	10

* (Minimum =01, Maximum=05)

DISCUSSION

We have documented the consequences of a medical emergency for patients visiting the Emergency Room of a tertiary level teaching facility in Karachi. These are based on patients perceived responses. We have surveyed a hundred patients and the findings can help us develop an understanding of the patients opinion, on what may be a serious fall-off, of an unexpected event in their lives. We cannot generalize the findings, since our study population was more educated and better placed socio-economically than the rest of the population.

The perceived adverse consequences of a medical emergency will depend on the patient's presenting medical problem, a confounding variable that we have not considered in our study. Nonetheless, the findings do offer us an insight into the areas of concern, as a result of the medical emergency for the patients. This insight will have implications for medical practice. Reduced household income, as a result of illness, is well documented in literature^{5,6}. We have found that the Emergency Room patients feel that they will not have a major impact on their job or employment, as a result of the medical emergency but it will have adverse financial consequences. This issue requires further exploration since a single episode of a medical emergency may not have adverse influence on employment but if the illness continues than the consequences may be unfavorable.

There is evidence that a medical condition can adversely effect family life⁷. The respondents in our study perceive the consequence of the medical emergency to have a variable impact on their family life. We must see this finding in the background of the very strong family ties that exists in Pakistan. An adverse event in the life of a person can upset the entire family, if the individuals concerned have a close relationship.

There are social consequences of ill health⁸.

The Emergency Room patients surveyed did report possible adverse social consequences following their medical emergency. This area requires further exploration and debate since man is a social animal and social interactions are important in a person's life.

Adverse consequences of medical illness on recreational life have been reported⁹. A variable adverse effect on recreational life is expected by the emergency room patients, following a medical emergency. This area requires further exploration and debate since recreation is very important for health.

Medical conditions can lead to reduction in self-confidence¹⁰. A variable adverse impact on self-confidence is reported by emergency room patients. Since reduction in self-confidence can lead to disturbances in the life of a person, further exploration and debate on this issue is required.

"Psyche" is considered to be an important element determining quality of life¹¹. It is important to note with concern that a major impact on "Psyche" is expected by the emergency room patients, as a result of a medical emergency. It is a caring and humanistic approach of the Health Care Providers which is holistic and takes along the patient and their attendants, which can effectively prevent any adverse impact on the "Psyche" of a patient. This issue requires further exploration and debate. We have attempted to study the impact of a medical emergency on a patient. This aspect has not been studied so far and merits further exploration in order to rectify the situation.

CONCLUSION

We have documented the consequences of a medical emergency for our emergency room patients. The findings of our study have serious practical implications for emergency medical services and our policy makers on health. Further studies and debate on this important issue is strongly recommended.

QUESTIONNAIRE

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Age: _____ Sex: _____

Marital Status: _____ Education: _____

Occupation: _____

1. Please rate the consequence of the “Medical Emergency” on following aspects of your life:

(Scale: 1= minimum; 5=maximum)

Please tick against the appropriate box

<i>Aspect of life</i>	<i>SCORE</i>				
	01	02	03	04	05
Job/Employment					
Family life					
Social life					
Finance					
Recreational life					
Self-Confidence					
Psyche					

2. What will be the biggest loss to you due to the Medical Emergency?

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