

Patients' Satisfaction About Health Care Services in Outpatient Department of General Surgery at PIMS, Islamabad

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess the Patients' satisfaction about health care services in the outpatient department of General Surgery at PIMS, Islamabad.

Methodology: This is a prospective cross sectional study done for six months at General Surgery OPD, PIMS, Islamabad. All patients who attended the outpatient department of GSU-III were included. After consent patients answered a specially designed 30-item cross-sectional questionnaire regarding general convenience and satisfaction aspects regarding the OPD. Questions depicting the interpersonal relationships and the role of Doctors and the paramedic staff at the hospital are also included. All data was collected, recorded and analyzed using SPSS 17 and excel 2013.

Results: A total of 410 patients were included with the mean age of 41 years and male to female ratio was \approx 1:3. 57.4% patients had completed their secondary or higher secondary education. 12.1% were labourers, 19.5% were students, 19.5% were unemployed and 34.1% were housewives. Most of the population was already registered at the general surgery department PIMS.

Response to various questions regarding general convenience and satisfaction aspects regarding the OPD were averagely rated 'agree' or 'strongly agree' by 96.3% patients, while 14.6% had their reservations. Answers depicting the interpersonal relationships and the role of Doctors and the paramedic staff at the hospital were appreciable in 71.95% and 64.6% of the cases respectively. 16.2% and 19.5% negated respectively. Interviews from all patients were taken into account in data analysis and conclusion. In sum, the patient's satisfaction (58.5%) with the overall care (62.1%) were satisfactory. 59.7% patients wished to recommend this service to others.

Conclusion: Most of the patients who visited the Outpatient department of General Surgery Unit III were satisfied regarding the overall care and the behavior of doctors and paramedical staff interacting with them.

Key words: Patient Satisfaction, Patient Acceptance of Health Care, Outpatients.

Introduction

Patient satisfaction is the most important objective of health care services and it depends on a variety of factors.^{1, 2} The environment of the hospital and attitude of doctors and other paramedical staff is a new experience for the patients.² For doctors, interaction with the patients is a routine; be it in the emergency department, outpatient department, wards or operation theatres but for patients it is not usual to encounter doctors. Patients when visiting the hospitals, they come up with a lot of expectations and

these include doctors' attitude, the behavior of the paramedics and other staff members, availability of the basic amenities and the general atmosphere of the hospital. Compliance to any treatment plays a major role in the speedy recovery of the patient and that mainly depends on patient satisfaction.^{3,4,5}

Evaluation of the standard of care at a hospital is decided by the patients, doctors, nurses, management, medical associations and accreditation organizations. All of them may have some stake in

defining the standards of medical care but patients play a major role. Several studies have been conducted in Pakistan⁵ and Iran⁶ regarding the evaluation of the patient satisfaction in different domains like in-patient, day case surgery satisfaction^{7,16} but limited local data is available about patient experiences from Out Patients Department (OPD) and their satisfaction.

Methodology

This is a prospective cross sectional study done for six months at General Surgery OPD of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Islamabad. PIMS is a - bed tertiary care teaching hospital in the public sector that imparts both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and training. PIMS receives a variety of patients, not only from the twin cities but there is a huge influx of patients from KPK, AJK and other areas of Punjab.

All patients who attended outpatient department of GSU-III were included in this study. After consent patients answered a specially designed 30-item cross-sectional questionnaire regarding general convenience and satisfaction aspects regarding the OPD. Questions depicting the interpersonal relationships and the role of doctors and the paramedic staff at the hospital are also included. All data was collected, recorded and analyzed using SPSS 17 and excel 2013.

Results

A total of 410 patients were included with mean age of 41 years and male to female ratio was \approx 1:3, 103 patients were male and 307 females. 57.4% patients had completed their secondary or higher secondary education. 12.1% were labourers, 19.5% were students, 19.5% were unemployed and 34.1% were housewives. Most of the population was already registered at the general surgery department PIMS.

Response to various questions regarding general convenience and satisfaction aspects regarding the OPD were averagely rated 'agree' or 'strongly agree' by 96.3% patients, while 14.6% had their reservations. Majority of patients (90%) had an easy access to basic amenities but only 31% of the respondents were satisfied with the cleanliness of the toilets. Answers depicting the interpersonal relationships and

the role of Doctors and the paramedic staff at the hospital were appreciable in 71.95% and 64.6% of the cases respectively. 16.2% and 19.5% negated respectively. Interviews from all patients were taken into account in data analysis and conclusion. In sum, the patient's satisfaction (58.5%) with the overall care (62.1%) were satisfactory. 59.7% patients wished to recommend this service to others.

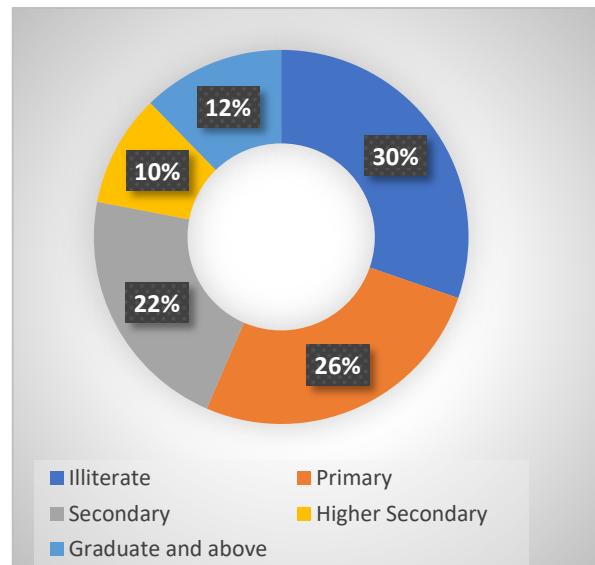


Figure 1.: Literacy Rate of Patients visiting the General Surgery OPD

Table I: Agree and Strongly Agree Response rates of convenience and general satisfaction of the patients visiting the General Surgery OPD

Convenience and General Satisfaction	
Time required to locate the OPD	3 min
Time required for Hospital Registration	26 min \pm 30 sec
Comfort level of OPD Consultation room	72.43%
Comfort level of OPD waiting area	48.10%
OPD General Sanitation	64.33%
Cleanliness of toilets	40.35%

Table II: Agree and Strongly Agree Response rates of the patients visiting the General Surgery OPD with respect to the role of the Doctors

Role of Doctors	
Professionalism shown by the Doctor	70.40%
Doctor's availability in the OPD	93.20%
Specialist's availability in the OPD	81.60%
Time devoted by the doctor	67.20%
Time required to get a Consultation after reaching the hospital was acceptable	49.90%

General conduct of the doctor	73.50%
Were you Informed about your illness	94.20%
Need for Investigations was explained	64.70%
Any queries regarding the management plan were addressed	91.20%
Problems and queries were adequately addressed	91.00%

Table III: Agree and Strongly Agree Response rates of the patients visiting the General Surgery OPD with respect to the role of the Paramedical Staff	
Paramedical Staff	
Behavior of The Paramedical Staff	63.90%
Professionalism shown by the Paramedical Staff	65.30%
Waiting time for dressing room after consultation	18 min \pm 30 sec

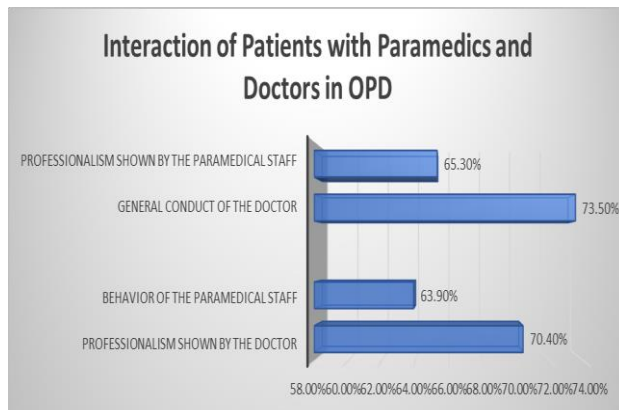


Figure 2. Depicting a comparative analysis of patient's interaction with the Doctors and the Paramedical Staff at the General Surgery OPD

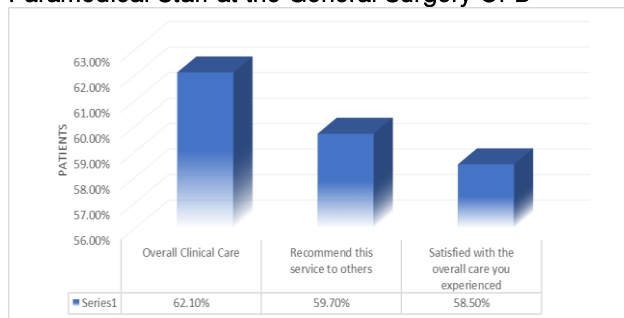


Figure 3. Patient responses depicting Outcomes of the overall patient satisfaction at the General Surgery OPD

Discussion

This study was conducted in order to evaluate the level of satisfaction of patients with various aspects of healthcare in OPD of General Surgery Unit III, PIMS.¹

The findings of this study will help in the overall improvement of healthcare services.

In all the service oriented systems, the feedback of consumers plays an important role in the improvement of the product; similarly, patient satisfaction is a major determinant of the health care system. Patient compliance influences the end results of any treatment that is in turn determined by the fact that how much satisfied patient goes home.

Compared to a study by Prahlad et al, where 48% of respondents were male, in our study 25% of the male patients voluntarily participated in this study and the percentage of female patients was 75% as compared to 52%.⁸ Our results were consistent with Athar Mohd et al, in terms of literacy rate where 47% of being graduates and above, indicating higher educational status and in our setting 57% of them had either passed primary or secondary education.⁹ The reason for this similarity could be because both the hospitals are tertiary care located in the major cities.

A vast majority of respondents agreed that the hospital was clean 328 (80%) and adequately ventilated 287 (70%). In a study conducted by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, patient satisfaction with waiting time, accessibility of services, and cleanliness of the facility were also high¹⁴(mean score of 1.70 out of 2). The hospital staff in the waiting area was found to be respectful 348 (85%) and fair 336 (82%) towards the patients. However only 31% of the respondents were satisfied with the cleanliness of the toilets. These results were consistent with a study conducted by Fatima et al in a tertiary care hospital of Lahore in April 2013.¹⁰

The patients had no difficulty locating the reception desk of the health facility 389 (95%). As per hospital protocol patients had to get an OPD slip from the registration desk. After reaching the waiting area the patient interacts with the attendant who is responsible for sending patients inside the doctors room according to their slip numbers.¹⁰ Similar results were obtained in the study conducted in Rawalpindi, Pakistan where according to 92.3% of patents, registration and documentation at the hospital reception was convenient and 96% were satisfied with reception staff attitude.¹¹

The doctor-patient interaction was assessed on a 5-point Likert Scale including: 1= strongly agree, up to 5= strongly disagree. Various aspects of doctor-patient interaction were asked, including professionalism, availability, privacy, confidentiality, communication skills, informed consent, addressing the patients' queries and proper guidance regarding the follow up plan.

Patients' views on various aspects of doctor-patient interaction were ascertained. Majority of patients found the doctor to be courteous (75%), listened attentively to the patients (72%), gave patients an opportunity to talk about their illness (70), advised follow up to the patients (70%) and made the patient comfortable during the examination (85%). This is comparable to other international studies which reported that 88–92% of their patients believed that they were treated with respect^{11,12} and dignity. According to a study carried out in Karachi 58.6% of patients said that consent was taken before examination and 62.4% of the patients agreed that the doctor maintained privacy.¹ The quality of doctor's communication during history taking and discussion with the patient has an impact on the health outcome of the patient.¹³

Majority of patients (64.6%) was satisfied with the behavior or paramedical staff, overall clinical care and their professionalism and they were willing to revisit the hospital and recommend this facility to others (70%). This was a very encouraging response and indicates a high satisfaction of the patients with the hospital.¹⁰ Good experience with the doctors and paramedics on one side, but there is another factor that plays an important role in the satisfaction of patients. This is a public sector hospital and caters a wide range of patients belonging to different socioeconomic status. Patients do not have a lot of expectations as compared to some private hospital and since the majority of people visiting such hospitals belong to a low socioeconomic status, access to the consultant with a minimal registration fee is the major factor for their satisfaction. However, we need to bring further improvements and deal with the reservations that patients had.¹

Conclusion

Most of the patients who visited Outpatient department of General Surgery Unit III were satisfied regarding the overall care and the behavior of doctors and paramedical staff interacting with them.

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