

Original Research

Patient Satisfaction in ENT Out Patient Department of a Multispeciality Hospital

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ABSTRACT

Background: Patient satisfaction is an important parameter to measure quality and effectiveness of healthcare delivery. The study determines the satisfaction level among patients attending ENT Out Patient Department regarding various services availed by the patient in the multispeciality hospital.

Methods: Prevalidated bilingual questionnaire were used among 50 consented patients. The questions included various aspects of the hospital including signages, OPD logistics, consultation with the doctor, behaviour of the staff, pharmacy services, laboratory services and billing facilities.

Results: More than 94% were satisfied with the overall experience. Patients were satisfied with the staff behaviour. Dissatisfaction was towards the waiting period to obtain laboratory reports and dispensing of drugs.

Conclusion: Regular survey for patient satisfaction is an important tool to identify areas that need improvement. Better communication of turn around time and usage of automated equipment's in the laboratory and rapid drug dispensing mechanisms can be implemented if feasible.

Key words – Patient satisfaction, PREM, ENT OPD, Out Patient Department.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 21st Century we are experiencing the best healthcare, diagnostic and management facilities in the hospitals worldwide. The hospital has many stakeholders and always the healthcare is talked about very scientifically as healthcare workers availability, bed availability, treatment facilities available, diagnostic facilities and other parameters. But now the need is felt to also know, how the patient, being the main stakeholder feels or experiences in the hospital about the care given. Emphasis is being laid on Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREM) and Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROM).

OUT PATIENT DEPARTMENT (OPD) is considered shop window and is key department of any hospital. It is the first contact point between most of the patient and healthcare workers.

Historically, physicians and surgeons have focused on surgical technique and objective outcomes as measures of "patient satisfaction," while patients place great value on the surgeon patient interaction¹.

Patients before visiting the healthcare facility carry expectations, perceptions but actual experience leads to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Patient satisfaction has been defined as the degree of congruency between a patient's expectations of ideal care and his/her perception of the real care he/she receives. Satisfaction is achieved when the patient receives care and services that has been supportive, positive, satisfying and meets their expectations¹.

Patients being the end consumers of the health care services are the key factor in determining the use of services² in future. Patient satisfaction also measures quality and effectiveness of the delivered healthcare. The data gathered by measuring patient satisfaction

reflects care provided by the various areas of the healthcare facility and can serve as a tool for learning. Respect for patient's needs and wishes are important. Due to increased levels of competition in the healthcare industry, emphasis on consumerism, patient satisfaction has become an important measurement for monitoring health care performance¹.

As, only few such studies are conducted before we planned to conduct a survey among patients to know the satisfaction level after attending OPD. Hence the present study was undertaken to assess the satisfaction level of patients who attended ENT OPD and utilized other related services in the hospital.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study of patient satisfaction was conducted among those patients attending the ENT OPD of a multi-speciality hospital in Southern Kerala. The study was conducted among 50 patients who consented and for a period of two month.

Inclusion criteria - Patients attending ENT OPD, who consented for the study between the age ranges of 18years to 65 years.

Exclusion criteria - Patients attending other than ENT OPD services, who needed emergency attention and who had mental disorders.

The study is Descriptive and prospective in nature.

The questionnaire was prepared and the study was planned after obtaining clearance from the Institute Head.

A pre validated bilingual questionnaire including questions in English and Malayalam was used to obtain patient response.

The socio demographic data of age, sex, educational status, occupation and marital status of the patient was obtained. Questions pertaining to appointment system and registration fees was asked. Logistic arrangements in the outpatient departments like seating arrangements in the lounge, cleanliness in the ENT OPD, drinking water facility and convenience to reach OPD was asked. Some questions regarding professional care and quality of consultation by the doctor like history taking, examination, explanation regarding underlying illness, explaining about the treatment and what was the perception of the patient how much the doctor tried to know the patient was included.

Crucial questions regarding waiting time were asked which included details of waiting time for consultation,

for obtaining drugs from pharmacy, obtaining laboratory reports and finally billing was also included. Questions regarding another important aspect of patient satisfaction was also included, that is behavior of healthcare workers. The patient's perception of behavior of the doctor, nurses and paramedical staff including the staff at registration desk, pharmacy, laboratory, billing area and supporting staff was recorded. The questionnaire ended finally asking the patient to rate the quality of care and quality of services the hospital provided for patients attending the ENT OPD. Opine if the patient would suggest and recommend our hospital to their family and friends.

It was a self-administered questionnaire with multiple choice and open-ended questions. Permission to conduct the study was taken from the superintendent of the concerned health care facility. All the patients were interviewed after they had consulted the doctor. Informed verbal consent was taken from all the participating patients before the start of the interview after telling them about the objective of the study and the approximate time that will be involved in the completion. They were also informed the participation was not compulsory. Questionnaire given only to patients who consent to participate in the study.

Statistical Analysis

Data so collected was analysed using SPSS. Based on the finding appropriate recommendations was suggested for the improvement of level of patient satisfaction availing ENT OPD services.

RESULTS

The study was undertaken at a Multispecialty Hospital, in South Kerala. The study included 50 patients who visited the ENT OPD. Among the 50 patients who participated in the study, 50% of the patient belonged to 31-45 yrs followed by 30% who were between 18-30 yrs. 62% of the participants were female patients. Male: Female ratio of the study group was 1:1.63. Of the women patients 40% were house wives.

All of the patients were educated with a high school to graduate degree, 44% of the patients were graduates. The participants varied from employed persons to housewife. 30% of the study population have business of their own. 80% of the study group included married people. The socio demographic data of the study group in given in table No 1.

Variables	Sub groups	Frequency	Percentages
Age	18 – 30 yrs	15	30
	31 – 45 yrs	25	50
	46 – 60 yrs	10	20
	> 60 yrs	-	-

Sex	Male	19	38
	Female	31	62
Educational status	Illiterate	-	-
	Primary school	8	16
	Middle school	5	10
	Higher school	14	28
	Graduate & above	22	44
	Not answered	1	2
Occupation	Service	15	30
	Business	4	8
	Labourer	7	14
	House wife	20	40
	Student	2	4
	Unemployed	2	4
Marital status	Married	40	80
	Unmarried	9	18
	Separated	1	2
Total		50	100%

Table 1: Distribution of the study population according to the socio -demographic variables

When asked about the seating arrangements in the OPD waiting area, 88% felt it was satisfactory but 10% of the study group were unsatisfied about the seating arrangement in the OPD. It was good to know that 98% of the study group were satisfied about the cleanliness maintained in the OPD.

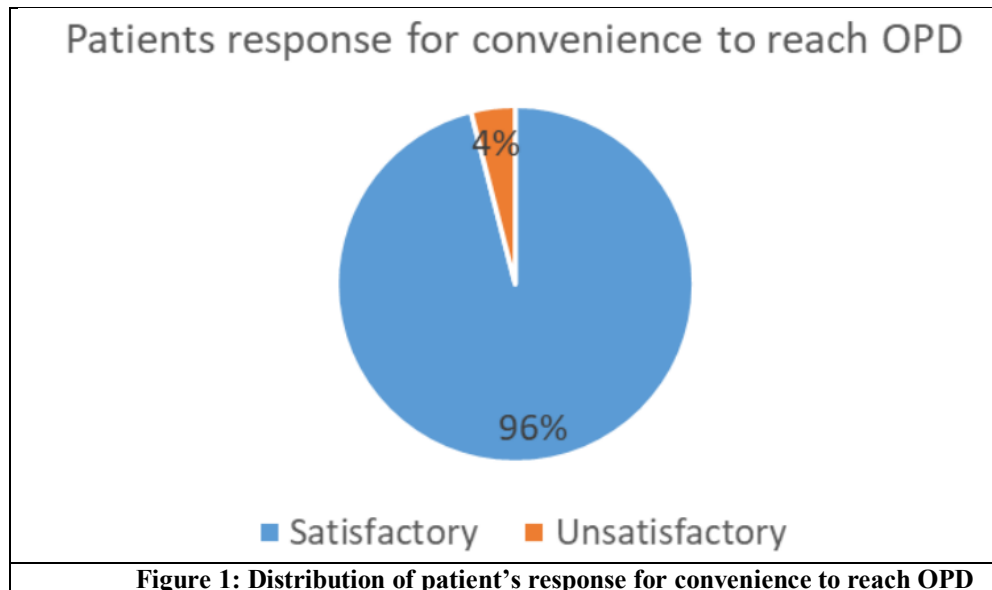
Availability of drinking water is a basic necessity. 80% of the study group were satisfied about the availability

of drinking water but 12% were unsatisfied. When further enquired they felt it was located away from the OPD premises and locating the water filter was difficult. The responses regarding satisfaction of facilities in OPD area is mentioned in Table No 2.

96% of the patients felt there was proper directions to reach the ENT OPD and were satisfied regarding the signages as seen in Figure 1.

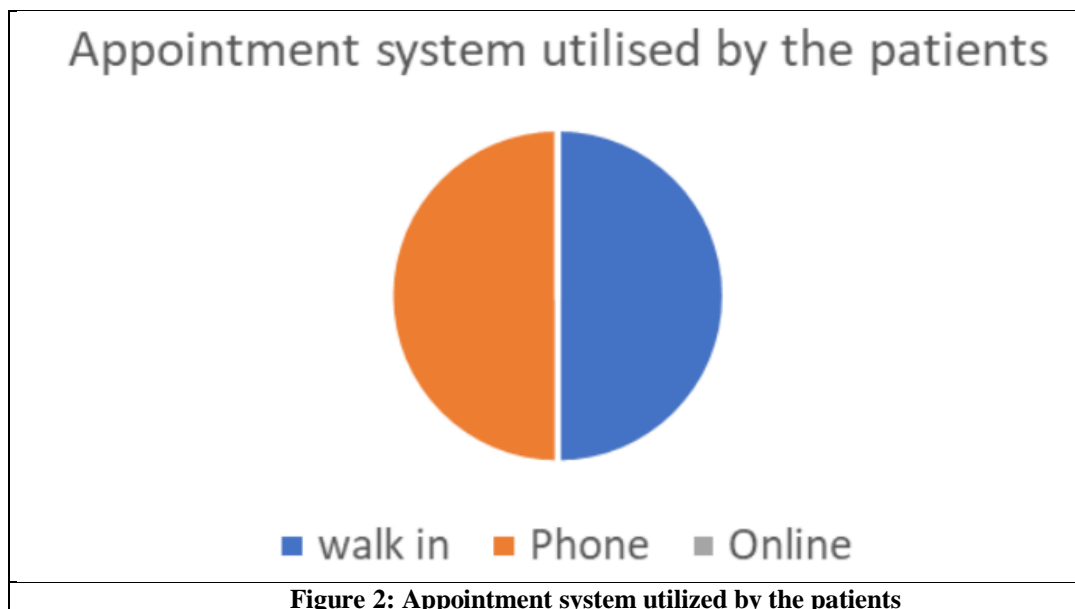
Variables	Responses from the study participants	Frequency	Percentage
Seating arrangement in the lounge	Satisfactory	44	88
	Unsatisfactory	5	10
	Not answered	1	2
Cleanliness in the OPD	Satisfactory	49	98
	Unsatisfactory	-	-
	Not answered	1	2
Drinking water facility in the OPD	Satisfactory	40	80
	Unsatisfactory	6	12
	Not answered	4	8
Convenience to reach ENT OPD	Satisfactory	48	96
	Unsatisfactory	2	4
	Not answered	-	-

Table 2: Distribution of responses regarding satisfaction of services available at the OPD waiting area



In our hospital patients can fix an appointment (as seen in Figure 2) either by phone or online and also can walk in but will have to wait if there are fixed appointments. 50% of the study population fixed appointment by

phone other 50% walked into OPD without appointment. No online appointment facilities used by patients. And 90% of the patients felt registration fee was reasonable.



Majority, 98% were satisfied with the examination and time spent by the ENT doctor during consultation. All were satisfied about the doctor explaining about their illness and treatment given to them. Most of the patients, 98% responded they will follow the advice. 94% felt they understood the illness after explained by the doctor. Majority of the patients were satisfied that the doctor tried to know the history and details of the

patients and had time to talk and counsel them. Around 82% of the patients responded that their consultation was for an average of 15 – 20 minutes, others with severe illness need consultation of more than 20 minutes.

Professional care and depth of	Responses from the study	Frequency	Percentage
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relationship	participants		
Examination by doctor	Satisfactory	49	98
	Unsatisfactory	-	-
	Not answered	1	2
Doctors explanation about treatment	Satisfactory	50	100
	Unsatisfactory	-	-
	Not answered	-	-
Following doctors advise	Satisfactory	49	98
	Unsatisfactory	-	-
	Not answered	1	2
Understanding illness after consulting doctor	Satisfactory	47	94
	Unsatisfactory	-	-
	Not answered	3	6
Doctor tried to know about the patient	Satisfactory	48	96
	Unsatisfactory	-	-
	Not answered	2	4
Table 3: - Distribution of responses from the study group according to professional care and depth of relationship			

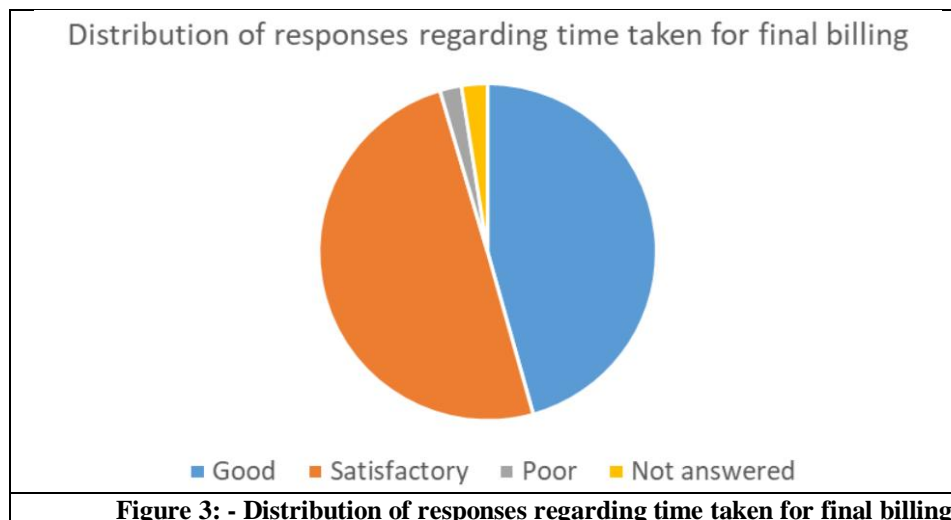
Waiting time is one of the most dissatisfactory parameters for the patients attending the OPD. 100% of patients felt they did not have to wait to meet the consultant. When asked about getting medicine from pharmacy, 64% of the patients were satisfied regarding the pharmacy facilities. But 26% felt there was delay in pharmacy-in queue and dispatch of drugs was the cause of delay.

Regarding laboratory facilities, 34% did not answer as they did not need any lab investigation. 42% were satisfied with the lab facilities, information available, information conveyed and time of availability of lab reports. But 24% of the respondents felt lab facilities available were average.

Waiting time	Responses from the study participants	Frequency	Percentage
Time from appointment to finding consultant	Satisfactory	50	100
	Unsatisfactory	-	-
Time taken in getting medicine from pharmacy	Satisfactory	32	64
	Unsatisfactory	13	26
	Not answered	5	10
Time taken to get lab reports	Satisfactory	21	42
	Average	12	24
	Poor	-	-
	Not answered	17	34
Time taken for final billing	Good	22	44
	Satisfactory	24	48
	Poor	1	2
	Not answered	3	6
Total		50	100%
Table 4: - Distribution of Responses from study group based on waiting period			

When questioned about the final billing procedure, as can be seen in figure 3, 44% and 48% felt it was good and satisfactory respectively. 6% did not answer. Over

all the patients were satisfied by the billing procedure, cost and the response at the billing section.



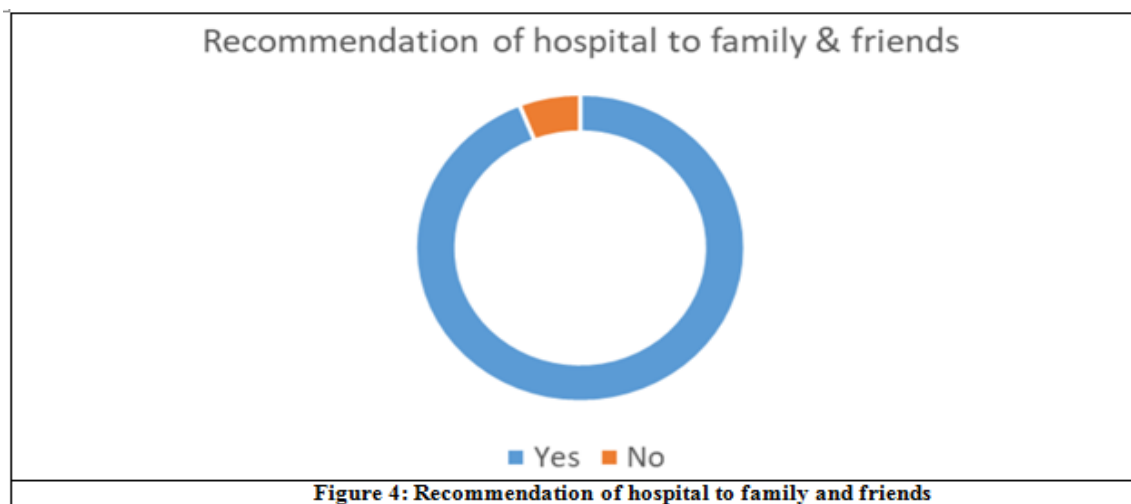
In the OPD and in all areas of the hospital, it is very important for all the hospital staff to be polite, cheerful and helpful at any stressful situation and at any time of the day. When asked regarding behaviour of the doctor, 92% felt doctor’s behaviour was satisfactory. When

questioned about nurses and paramedics behaviour – 78% felt it was satisfactory. 22% felt they did not behave well and were not providing the required information.

Type of health care worker	Responses from the study participants	Frequency	Percentage
Behaviour of the consultant	Satisfactory	46	92
	Average	3	6
	Poor	-	-
	Not answered	1	2
Behaviour of nurses and para medical staff	Satisfactory	39	78
	Average	11	22
	Poor	-	-
	Not answered	-	-

Table 5: Distribution of responses from study group regarding behaviour of health care workers

The overall appreciation of the hospital depends on whether the patients visiting the hospital will recommend it to their friends and relatives or not. 94% [47 patients] responded they would recommend our hospital to their near and dear ones.



DISCUSSION

Patient satisfaction questionnaire is useful in gaining an understanding of patient's needs and their perception of the OPD and the other service availed³. This shows the efforts of the healthcare facility towards improvement of services being provided to the patient at the hospital OPD and above all the patient's feel their opinion is valued and they were given an opportunity to be heard. Hence the present study was undertaken.

This study was undertaken at ENT OPD in a multi - speciality hospital. The study included 50 patients who visited the OPD.

Half of the patients in the study group belong to 31- 45 yrs of age, followed by 30% of the patients who are 18-30 yrs of age. In a study in Haryana¹ 34% of the patients were between 33-50 yrs and in a study conducted by Mohammed A⁴ et.al, there were 40% of patients belonging to the age group of 30-45yrs. Study by Sodani PR et.al, showed 45% were between 16-30 yrs of age⁵. Most of the patients in the age group of 30 – 50 years visit the ENT OPD in most of the hospitals of the country.

The male: female ratio in our study is 1.63:1 which is similar to studies conducted by Singh S¹ et.al, where male: female ratio is 48%:52%. Another study in Jaipur⁵ showed 47% of the patients involved in the study were males. But study in Nepal² showed 51.4% of their study population were females.

44% of the patients were graduates in our study which is similar to other studies conducted by Anchal et.al,⁶ Mohammed A et.al,⁴. A study from Lucknow reported more than 40% were graduates⁷. Study by Shrestha KK et.al, reported 39.9% were highly educated². It is found educated patients are more aware about facilities available in the hospital, generally have high expectations regarding the consultation, OPD facilities, waiting period and behaviour of the staff. Patients with low level education generally have low expectation levels as they are not aware about available hospital facilities and patients' rights.

80% of the patients are married which is similar as found in studies by Mohammed A⁴ et.al, (92%), Singh S¹ et.al.

In the present study 50% of the study population had fixed appointment by phone and the remaining walked into the OPD directly for consultation. In a study conducted by Lyngkhai R⁸ 64% of the patients came directly to the OP whereas 30% made appointments with phone calls and remaining 6% by mail. Another study at Trivandrum conducted by Jawahar SK³ showed 94% were satisfied with their appointment system which was by direct, phone call and by mail. In any hospital whether with appointment or not the patient will have to wait before consulting the doctor as consultation time for each patient cannot be fixed. Waiting time varies with type of hospital, type of

diagnostic test, number of patients, emergency procedures and type of illness each patient is presenting with. Hence it is impossible to schedule accurate time of consultation. Keeping this uncertainty, planning the seating arrangement, cleanliness, availability of toilet and drinking water facilities in waiting lounge becomes important. Some studies say the waiting lounge should have magazines, newspaper and television also so as to keep the patient engaged and also provide health awareness. Waiting time is the most important factor for patient satisfaction and that of the bystanders.

In the present study 88% of the patients were satisfied about the seating arrangements in the hospital. 98% felt the OPD is very clean. 80% said drinking water facility was satisfactory but 12% of the patient's felt water was placed faraway. Study by Kumari Ret.al⁹, found 92.9% were satisfied with the waiting area in their hospital as there was seating arrangement and availability of water but 31.3% felt the waiting area was clean and others felt it was not clean. In another study done by Sodani PR et.al⁵, patients were not satisfied with the waiting area as 46% said there was no proper seating arrangement, 30% felt there is no cleanliness and 31% said there is no drinking water facility. A study from Jabalpur⁶ reported that 68% were unsatisfied with toilet facilities and 56% were unsatisfied with the drinking water arrangements⁶. Another study also reported low level of satisfaction⁹. Similarly in another study patients were unsatisfied with seating arrangement and toilets⁴. Study by Jawahar SK reported only 50% were satisfied with the cleanliness of the hospital³. They were ok with the drinking water availability. Study in Lucknow reported 81.4% were satisfied with the seating arrangements in the OPD and only 31.3% felt the OP was clean⁹. A study from Jaipur reported that 54%, 71% and 69% of the patients were satisfied about the seating arrangement, cleanliness and drinking water facilities in the OPD⁵. Waiting area should have television, magazine, newspaper and toys. There should be adequate cleanliness, water and sanitary facilities. Hence the arrangements in the waiting lounge are one of the very important factors for patient satisfaction and calmly waiting for their turn to consult the doctor in the OPD.

Signage in bilingual is very essential in any hospital so that the patient easily finds the required OPD. Easy accessibility and a good signage system for the OPD services provide a good image for the hospital, comfort and satisfaction to the patient.

In our study 96% of the patients felt there was no difficulty in finding the ENT OPD. In other studies, conducted at Jaipur⁵, Trivandrum³, Karwar⁴ the satisfaction of the patient to locate the OPD is 87%, 94% and 67% respectively. Study by Kumari R et.al, 100% patients found it easy to locate the OPD's in the hospital⁹. 87% satisfaction in locating the OPD's

reported from Jaipur⁵. As the patient comes to the hospital only when sickness it is very important that they easily locate the required areas of the hospital to obtain the appropriate services.

Most of the patients (90%) felt the fee was reasonable and 8% also felt the fees was indeed low. In a study from Chennai⁸ 87% patient's felt the fees they are paying was high and another 13% it was reasonable. This mainly depends on the economic status of the patient.

The patient's consultation time spend with doctors is another important factor that determines satisfaction level among patients and their bystanders

When questioned regarding professional care and depth of patient doctor relationship, 98% were satisfied with the examination conducted by the doctor. Similarly in another study 96.5% of the patients were satisfied³. All were satisfied with the treatment given. 98% also told they would follow the advice given by the doctor, 94% understood their disease after explained by the doctor. Other study reported 79.4% were satisfied about the explanation regarding their illness³. Behaviour of the doctors 85% were satisfied⁵. Similarly in Lucknow the study reported 54.3%⁹. 96% felt the doctor tried to know their history and details during the examination. Doctor also gave them the necessary advice and counselling. Doctor patient relationship and trust needs to be built for only that the cooperates for examination and will likely follow the treatment orders or surgery orders and come back for follow up.

Average time recommended per OPD consultation is 5 – 15 minutes. 96% of patients opined the doctor spent 15 – 20 minutes for their examination, but some needed more than 30 minutes as they had to undergo endoscopy. Similarly, another study by Mohammed A et.al, 41% responded that the doctors spent 5-10 minutes, another 30% said the time was 10-15 minutes⁴. 85% patients felt doctors gave up to 10 minutes/ case⁵. The time spent for examination depends on the ailment of the patient and the type of the patient.

Short contact time is a common source of patient dissatisfaction and longer contact time gives better patient satisfaction. The doctors need to manage patient's privacy, confidentiality and dignity. The good behaviour of all the Healthcare workers allows for better care, compliance to treatment and follow up.

The most common cause for patient dissatisfaction is the waiting time spent in the hospital. 100% of the patients felt they did not wait for the doctor at consultation (depends on the appointment system). A study from Nepal² reported 49.8% dissatisfied due to the waiting time.

But there are other areas the patient needs to wait like the pharmacy, diagnostic and billing.

Regarding time spent in the pharmacy – 64% were satisfied but 26% were unsatisfied. In another study the

satisfaction was 65%⁴. Behaviour reported in another study showed 73% satisfaction in behaviour and drug dispatching by the pharmacy staff⁵. This was due to the queue system and drug dispatch system. A proper drug dispensing system is very important to overcome patients' dissatisfaction regarding waiting period to obtain the prescribed drugs. This is also needed to prevent noncompliance and avoid grave consequences of the medication errors⁹.

Regarding time spent in the laboratory – only 42% were satisfied, 24% felt the services given were average. A study by Shrestha KK reported high satisfaction level with lab facilities². Study by Kumari R reported 59.4% satisfaction with lab reports⁹. The Turnaround time or TAT should be informed to the patient during sample collection to avoid dissatisfaction on waiting to obtain diagnostic results.

Regarding final billing – 48% felt satisfied and another 44% felt services were really good. But study from Nepal² reported lower patient satisfaction in the billing facilities.

Patients come to the hospital with lot of pain and anxiety, expecting lot of empathy from the hospital, the health care workers need to be in their best behaviour all the time. Behaviour of the consultant and the other staff of the hospital are also one of the important factors in determining patient satisfaction. Behaviour of the consultant – 92% were satisfied and 6% felt it was average. In a study by Jawahar SK the patients felt that 56% of the doctors were well behaved, 35.5% could have been better³. In a study from Lucknow 73.3% were satisfied by the doctor's behavior⁹. Behaviour of the nurses and the paramedics – 78% felt satisfactory but 22% complained the staff were not polite.

94% said they would recommend the hospital for their family and friends and that is a true appreciation. Sharma A et.al, reported 94% of the patients responded that they would recommend their hospital to the others⁶. Another study reported 86% of patients replied to recommend the hospital³.

Satisfaction of patients attending the OPD is to be assessed periodically³.

Overall, the patients expressed satisfaction for OPD facilities is more than 90% except in the lab. A study in Chennai⁸ reported overall services in their hospital services is good and satisfactory in 59% and 41% respectively. Another study from Jabalpur⁶ reported overall satisfaction is excellent and average in 73% and 22% respectively. Study at Trivandrum³ reported overall patient satisfaction of 74.8%.

Patients' feedback is also an important tool necessary to identify problems that need to be resolved in improving the health services will may otherwise not come to the notice of the other stakeholders.

The difference in the various studies is due to variations in the ways services were delivered, differences in the

study population, sociocultural differences and level of literacy.

CONCLUSION

The result of any services encountered in the hospital generates either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Patients attending each hospital are responsible for spreading the good image of the hospital and therefore satisfaction of patients attending the hospital is equally important for hospital management. Poor patient satisfaction can lead to poor adherence to treatment with consequently poor health outcomes.

This study was conducted to survey the patient satisfaction of those attending the ENT OPD. Study group included 50 patients who were randomly, every 5th patient chosen.

Most of the patients are of 32 – 45 years of age, male to female ratio is 1.63:1. Half of the patients were graduates.

Our hospital being located in hilly area, people prefer to walk in directly to OPD or fix appointment through phone. None used the e-mailing system.

Waiting time is one of the causes of patient dissatisfaction. Hence the waiting lounge and the facilities there are of value. In our study the patients were satisfied regarding the seating arrangements, most felt the OPD is very clean. Some people were not satisfied regarding the drinking water facilities. Overall, the patients are satisfied with the waiting area.

Signage is important to reach the OPD. Patients are anxious and when they don't reach the OPD easily they will be very unhappy and irritated. In this study all the patients had no difficulty in reaching the ENT OPD.

"Consultation fee was reasonable" is the opinion of the patients. This also is a factor for patient satisfaction. Patients are always happy to get more than what they have paid for. Consultation time is as per the requirement of the case and most of the patients are satisfied of the same. Most of all the patients are satisfied with the consultation, they felt the doctor obtained their history, examined them, explained about the disease and treatment options. Good communication develops good rapport between the doctor and the patient, this is also an important aspect of patient satisfaction.

Pharmacy is always the bottle neck area of the hospital. Services are delayed as patients from OPD's reach here together and even the drug dispatch needs time and proper delivery system is important to avoid medication errors. Behaviour of the staff was reasonably good. More than half of patients are not satisfied with the lab facilities. Most felt they have to wait for long.

Behaviour of the staff is also important and providing of adequate information is also the key for good treatment. Staff need to be humble, empathetic, polite and courteous.

All the patients are satisfied the way they were received by the consultant, examined and he spoke to the patients. Behaviour is very important as patients who come to the hospital are anxious and have fear regarding their diseases. Behaviour of the nurses and the paramedics should always be polite, in this study 78% were only satisfied, so we should work on improvement in this aspect.

Overall satisfaction is only when the patient recommends the hospital to the others and is also ready to revisit the hospital in the future.

Regular feedbacks from patients need to be obtained but it is useful only if acted upon and are monitored to see if the changes have caused the desired effects.

There is always a scope of improvement in outpatient services. Therefore, it can be concluded that the OPD services form a very important component of Hospital services and feedback of patients are vital in quality improvement and overall improvement in services provided and reputation of the hospital.

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