

CUSTOMER PERCEPTION, ACCESSIBILITY AND SATISFACTION TOWARDS HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN A NURSING HOME IN KERALA - A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

WHO has defined health as 'a state of Physical Mental, Social and Spiritual well being and not mere the absence of disease'. Health has been declared a fundamental human right. The scope of health services vary widely from country to country and geographic region to region and are influenced by general and ever changing national, state and local health problem needs and attitudes as well as the available resources. The health care system is intended to deliver the health care services. It constitutes the management sector and involves organizational matters. It operates in the context of the socioeconomic and political framework of the country. Hospital is service institution which is of prime importance to man. The health

care system is to promote the health of the society. The health care system all over the world has changed during the last century.

KEYWORDS: Customer perception, accessibility, satisfaction, health care service, nursing home.

INTRODUCTION

Public relation is a relatively new service in hospitals. Nevertheless, it's rapid growth in recent years and the fact that many hospitals now have public relations programmes and public relations officers indicate that it has earned an important and permanent place in

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hospital set up. In some hospitals, the role of public relations has been superseded by the role of marketing communications; in others it has been relegated to the background by marketing. It is rightly said that employees are the first line of public relations. It is the responsibility of the management that all employees are made aware and constantly reminded that the hospital or clinic is judged by their actions, appearance and the quality of service they render.

PATIENT SATISFACTION

Health services have always been an essential human requirement because all the human beings need them for curative, preventive and rehabilitative purpose. It is the good quality health service that can confer healing. Attainment of quality service can physically and psychologically satisfy the patient. Patient satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a service's perceived performance or outcome in relation to his or her expectations. If the performance falls short of expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. If the performance matches the expectations, the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds expectation, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted for a definite purpose with the help of a structured personal interview to gather primary information as much as possible. The most appropriate research design for the study was descriptive research design.

Following are the steps in research design.

SAMPLING PLAN

a. Sampling Frame

The patients who took part in the study included OP and IP patients of Bindhu Nursing Home Kallara, Kottayam.

b. Sampling Unit

The sampling unit are the customers (in patients and outpatients) in the hospital.

c. Sample Size

Sample size taken for the study was 100 patients, (in patients & outpatients).

d. Sampling technique

The techniques utilized was simple random sampling technique.

METHODOLOGY

1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire was given to all the patients asking their opinion about the services of hospital.

2. Personal Interview

A face to face analytic interview was carried out with the patients where the patients were asked about their feelings and opinions on various services of the organization.

3. Hospital Data and Reports

Certain reports from the hospital provided the information as to the customer satisfaction surveys in the hospital, frequency of evaluation etc.

DATA COLLECTION

To produce reliable questionnaire both primary and secondary information was used. The questionnaire was prepared under the guidance of the guide and likert scale for measuring the attitudes of the customers of hospital was used for the study.

PRIMARY DATA

The primary data was collected from all the patients of the hospital.

SECONDARY DATA

It was collected from the website of the nursing home, from the nursing home personnel, nursing home records and certain reports from the public relation department.

Both primary and secondary data served the purpose in measuring customer satisfaction at hospital. Both are equally essential for any type of survey.

Table 1 Table showing gender distribution of patients who took part in the study at Bindhu Nursing home

Gender	Percentage
Male	61%
Female	39%

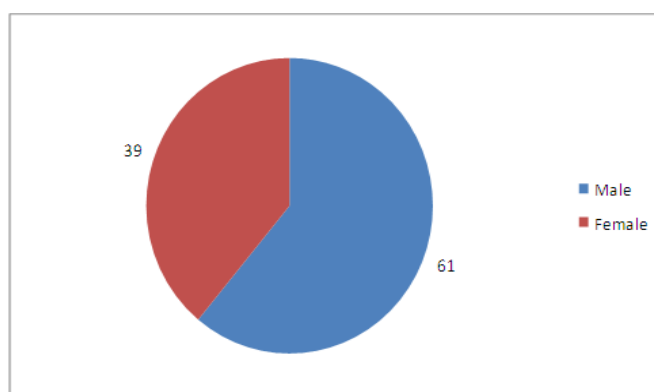


Figure 1 Graph showing gender distribution of patients who took part in the study at Bindhu Nursing home

Table 2 showing age profile of the patients who took part in the study at Bindhu Nursing home

Age	No.of patients
16-25	18
26-35	20
36-45	20
46-55	12
More than 55	30

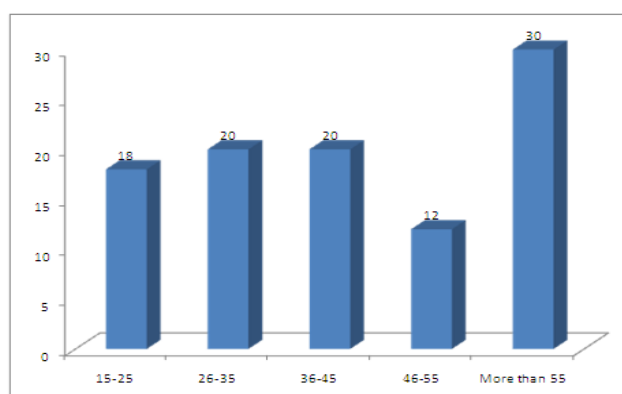


Figure 2 Graph showing age profile of the patients who took part in the study at Bindhu Nursing home

Experience to health care services in Bindhu Nursing home

Table 3 Table showing convenience to service

	Yes	No
Long waiting time for consultation	28	72
Convenient place for receiving consultation	64	36
OPD timing is adequate for your need	90	10
Receiving medical services from one department to another was difficult	20	80

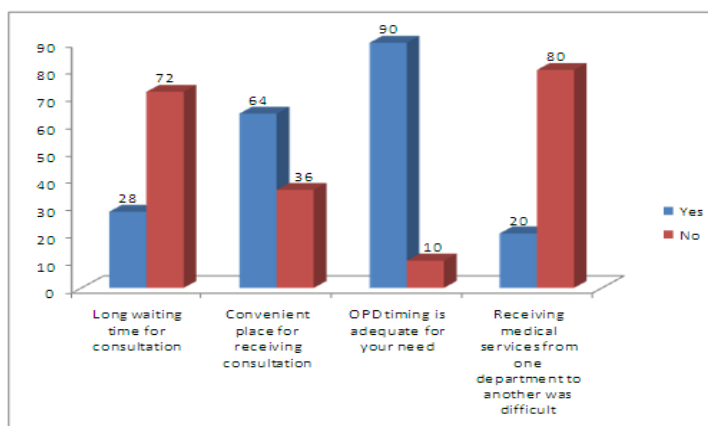


Figure 3 Graph Showing Convenience To Service

Table 4 Table showing quality of care

Quality of care	YES	NO
Doctor gave you an opportunity to ask about your illness	94	6
Hospital staff listened to your problems attentively	84	16
Treatment received from doctor was Good	90	10
All prescribed medicines were available in hospital pharmacy	72	28
Nurses were skilled in doing procedures	86	14

Table 5 Accessibility of patients to the health care services at Bindhu nursing home

Living distance from hospital	% of persons
5 Km and less	75
6 to 10 Km	19
More than 10 Km	6

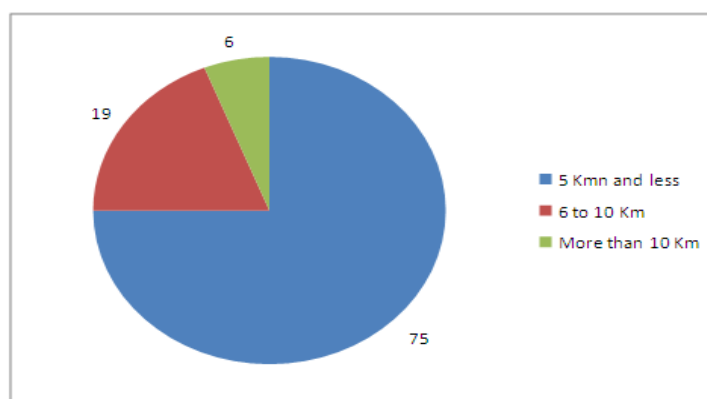


Figure 5 Graph showing distance to hospital

Interpretation

The above graph shows that 75% of the patients came from distance of less than 5 km. 19% of the patients had to travel a distance of 6-10 kilometers whereas only 6% of the patients had to travel for more than 10 km to reach the nursing home.

In Bindhu Nursing Home they are conducting frequent opinion surveys in OPD section for knowing the attitude of customers about their services. The PRO is in near accessibility to OPD patients so; he is easily solving issues within his range and enquiring patients for any complaints.

In inpatient section, patient opinion sheet are given before discharge. Thus they are getting patient opinion in IP. PRO and other office staffs are analyzing these opinions. Based on the opinion they are giving report to higher authority.

The Managing Director is the ultimate authority for making changes in the hospital Customer satisfaction is important in a hospital because a) it provides hospital authorities with a measure by which they can manage and improve hospital facilities. b) it is a point of differentiation. c) good customer satisfaction reduces negative word of mouth. d) good customer satisfaction helps in retaining patients and helps more new patients to come to the hospitals which in turn helps them to get better services from the hospital.

Accessibility to health care is important for prevention of disease, detection and treatment of disease, improving quality of life, preventing death and increasing life expectancy. Accessibility to health care facility. implies patients should be able to conveniently and confidentially use services such as primary care, dental, emergency and public health services.

The section related to accessibility had three components as; distance from hospital, waiting time and information regarding disease and management of diseases. The three components of accessibility consisted of nine questions.

The section on 'distance from hospital' contained four questions. 75% of the patients considered the hospital at easy accessible distance from their homes. More than Three fourth of the respondents (85%) told that they would get public transport easily when they needed to reach the hospital.

CONCLUSION

Bindhu Nursing Home is a Hospital in with 30 beds. The hospital is well equipped with diagnostic and therapeutic equipments. The two months project placement in hospital was very informative and helpful to learn the functioning of public relation department and to study the customer satisfaction towards health care services. In India good doctor patients

relationship is needed in many hospitals and human touch is lacking in many hospitals where hospitals are being operated as an industry. Good service, high quality, of care communication, facilities accessibility of medical care and behavior of doctors, nurses and paramedical staff go a long way in determining patients satisfaction.

It is more important however that the staffs of the Bindhu Nursing Home are highly skilled and competent. In addition they are endowed with patient's understanding, and are able to work calmly even under provocations. The care and service provided by the organization has gained a name of its own in the minds of the people in an around Kallara in Kottayam district.

DISCUSSION

Aparna Sinha (2005) has given the opinion that "Public health infrastructure are those basic services without which primary, secondary and territory health care services can't function. It has now been much realized that the importance of adequate infrastructure service in achieving a higher rate of growth and improving the over all quality of life in a highly competitive and globalized world both sector public and private individually can't be relied upon fully for adequate provision of health care infrastructural services because of their own restrictions and reservations. **Milosevic Drozan and Mette Bayyigit (1999)** in their studies have brought out the point that the improvement of health care service has a great effect on patient satisfaction. During the service delivery, the health care organization attempts to answer the reasonable expectations of patients. The expectations relate to many service dimensions, among them the phone system, appointment, availability and waiting times. Kareem et al, suggested that studies related to the patient satisfaction are important but this topic has always been ignored by the service provider. Therefore, it is important that regular internal audit may be conducted to assess the patient behavior and satisfaction. Establishing a regular internal audit system will help in identifying the patient's problem timely and providers will be able to work out strategies to resolve them. Donabedian, studied patients satisfaction with several aspects and determined that when patient gets medical assistance needed in sufficient amount and at appropriate cost, he becomes satisfied and consider the service as accessible. **De Man et al (2002)** recommend that the promotion of service quality to medical services satisfy patients demands should be a primary aim for hospitals that seek to be more successful.

Radwin (2000) in his study mentioned that product quality is a strategic tool for attaining operational efficiency and improving business performance. **According to Leinonen et al. (2001)** service quality, from the patients viewpoint, requires that medical staff exhibit respect, empathy, concern as well as more traditional courtesy, professional skills and service attitude.

Folkes and Patrick (2003) in their study show converging evidence of a positivity effect in customers perceptions about service providers. According to them when the customer has little experience with the service, positive information about a single employee leads to the perception that the firms other service providers are positive. **Jain and Gupta (2004)** to postulate that although the medical industry is different from general service industries, high service quality is the key to success factor. **Arasli et al (2008)** maintain that it is necessary o develop a systematic approach to find out the real requirement of patients, as this leads to greater customers satisfaction and ultimately make the hospital more successful. (GHS Handbook on Customer Care, 2009)Customer care in healthcare should seek to provide higher or superior customer satisfaction, build customer loyalty and acquire new customers. In the studies by **Hardeep Chahel (2002)** it has been emphasized that patients, **health care delivery of** high quality service and outcome quality factors require deep attention in health care providers to improve patient prevailing condition in the public health care sector. Chanawangse et al (1996) suggested that patient satisfaction is influenced by distance of health facility and price of transportation. Most of the patients do not like to come back to hospital for even free of cost for daily dressing due to transportation and other expenditures.

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