

PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC HOSPITALS IN TERMS OF PATIENT SATISFACTION- A STUDY

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Abstract: Improving health of citizens directly paves the way for economic development of a country. Hence health presents a challenge for all nations. With the expansion of hospitals in terms of availability of specialties, improved technologies and facilities shot up the expectations of patients and their relatives to a large extent. So a patient's satisfaction may not be totally influenced by the quality of care alone. It may not be influenced by the quality of physician available alone, but it reflects how the medical care has been delivered. Hence there is a dire need to study the level of patient satisfaction. So for this purpose a study of patient satisfaction in public hospitals is of paramount importance. Therefore this study is undertaken.

1. INTRODUCTION

Health is a political, economic and social issue (Gupta,2016,p.1) Improving health of citizens directly paves the way for economic development of a country. Hence health presents a challenge for all nations. That's why, health was included in the charter of United Nations in 1945 since 'medicine' was one of the 'pillars of the peace' (Health Survey and Planning Commission- Mudaliar Committee ,1959,p.31). In a study by the Pew Research Center, a median of 85% of respondents believe it as a problem in their countries. The Report of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health (CMH) was a land mark for clearly establishing the link between health and wealth, between the development of a society and economic prosperity (Jeffrey, 2001)

India has 2.4 per cent of world's land mass and has 17.5 per cent of the world's population (Research, Reference and Training Division, 2013)² but spends 1 per cent (in 2010) of the total global health care spending(WHO 2013)³.The traditional medicine and treatment underwent a sea change with modern sophisticated robotic treatment. Many contagious, infection and water borne diseases dominate the morbidity pattern especially in rural areas. Advent of dominant private sector increased the cost of medical care and services which in turn made it unaffordable for the poor and the underprivileged.

In India's health history, the emergence of privatization of health sector appears to have been accepted without much contest (Sujatha Rao,2017,p.28) With the expansion of hospitals in terms of availability of specialties, improved technologies and facilities shot up the expectations of patients and their relatives to a large extent. So a patient's satisfaction may not be totally influenced by the quality of care alone. It may not be influenced by the quality of physician available alone, but it reflects how the medical care has been delivered (Mishra & Mishra,2014). Hence there is a dire need to study the level of patient satisfaction in public hospitals as they are funded by the government.

2. STUDY AREA

So for this purpose a study of patient satisfaction in public hospitals is of paramount importance. Sri Venkateswara institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS), Tirupati is purposely selected mainly due to proximity of the researcher.

Hence, with this backdrop this paper proposes to analyze patient satisfaction in Sri Venkateswara Insti tute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS),Tirupati. The main objectives of the study are as follows:-

- ✓ To study the different factors affecting patient satisfaction and
- ✓ To suggest measures for improvement of services leading to better patient satisfaction

SVIMS is located in a backward region of Rayalaseema in the newly formed State of Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh is one of the 29 states of India. On 2 June 2014, the north-western portion of Andhra Pradesh was separated to form the new state Telangana and the longtime capital of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, was transferred to Telangana as part of the division. However, in accordance with the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 the state is made, in the inland southwestern part of the state, and Coastal And up of the two major regions of Rayalaseemahra to the east and northeast, bordering the Bay of Bengal. It has a total of 13 districts, nine in Coastal Andhra Region and four in Rayalaseema Region. As of 2011 Census of India, the state had a population of 49,386,799 with a population density of 308/km. Andhra Pradesh ranks tenth of all Indian States in the Human Development Index scores. The National Council of Applied Economic Research district analysis in 2001 reveals that Krishna, West Godavari and Chittoor are the three districts in rural AP with the highest Human Development Index scores in ascending order. SVIMS is situated in Chittoor District. (Wikipedia)

Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS), Tirupati, was established in the year 1993, under the aegis of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, as a modern super specialty hospital. It was set up with a view to provide Super Specialty facilities with nominal cost to the poor. Its major objectives include service, training and education & research in advanced medical sciences and technology. It was granted the status of a university in the year 1995 by an act of A.P. State legislature vide act no.12 of 1995.

The objectives of the Institute are:

- a) to create a centre of excellence for providing medical care, education and research facilities of a high order in the field of medical sciences in the existing super-specialties and such other super-specialties as may develop in future, including continuing medical education and hospital administration.
- b) to develop patterns of teaching in postgraduate level and in super specialties so as to set a high standard of medical education.
- c) to provide for training in paramedical and allied fields, particularly in relation to super-specialties.
- d) to function as a referral hospital and.,
- e) to provide for post graduate teaching and conduct of research in the relevant disciplines of modern medicine and other allied sciences, including inter-disciplinary fields of physical and biological sciences.

It was ranked 62 amongst the top 100 Higher Education Institutions in India,

As per the records of SVIMS 2012-13 Report, the SVIMS comprises 28 medical departments and 8 non-medical departments, Moreover, the SVIMS has 4 lifesaving schemes which render yeoman service through free medical treatment to the needy and down-trodden coming from nook and corner of India in general and AP in particular (SVIMS,2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to evaluate the performance of the SVIMS in terms of patient satisfaction, a field study is undertaken. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The secondary data is collected from the available literature on the subject. The primary data is elicited through a specifically structured questionnaire which is canvassed among the select sample in the field by personal interview method. In addition personal discussions have also been held with the officials, doctors and other employees of the SVIMS.

The study about patient satisfaction was conducted by circulation of structured questionnaire amongst 100 patients and relatives of private and general wards. The questions asked were about the process of patient getting admitted, room preparation, behavior of doctors, nurses, orderlies, food services, cleanliness of toilet, etc. Further personal discussions were also held with the select doctors and nurses who have been selected at random SVIMS.

4. FINDINGS

The findings of the study are as follows:-

Location of the Hospital

It is concluded that a great majority (92%) feel that the hospital is conveniently located.

Admission procedure

About 57 per cent of the respondents opined that they waited more than one hour to meet the doctor and 59 per cent respondents waited less than one hour at registration counter for admission. Around 76 percent of the respondents opined that they completed the admission within a day

Initial Treatment

About 44 percent of the respondents waited less than an hour for initial treatment. More than 41 per cent of the respondents waited two to ten hours for specific treatment after diagnosis. This is not an encouraging aspect of S V IMS.

Explanation about disease and treatment by doctors

As many as 69 percent the patients told that they were not told about the disease, tests to be carried out and treatment options and costs at the time of admission. They were told on the spot which took the time for the patients to get money ,paving the way for delay in treatment and procedures.

Doctors' care

Nearly 12 percent of the patients/attendants felt that doctors' care it was excellent, 30% patients felt very good, 37 percent felt it was good. About 16 percent said that it was average while Only 5 percent said it to be poor. Some people felt that the doctors have become less sensitive and empathetic to their problems. The new generations of doctors should be trained in soft skills and value of empathic care must be reemphasized. Although 79% of responses showed that the doctors care was good, yet 21% people felt that the doctors have become less sensitive and empathetic to their problems.

Nursing and other staff services

Over the years, number of nurses have decreased due to high demand, low salary and hence low supply and number of working staff nurses have decreased. This is causing increased stress amongst them leading to some downfall in their services and behavior. This has started showing in their efficiency and behavior. More number of staff nurses should be posted for patient care. Management should devise methods and increase salary to attract and retain good nurses. In spite of low strength of nurses, around 78 per cent of the outpatient respondents were satisfied with the quality of nursing care provided. More than 58 per cent of the inpatient respondents were satisfied with the courtesy of the staff.

Medicines

A great majority of the respondents (83 percent) said that all medicines are not available in the hospital.

Food services

Only 11% patients felt that food in the hospital premises was good, 24 percent felt it was average. A good majority of the respondents said that quality of food was poor. This was the second major dissatisfaction among the respondents

Environment

As many as 86 percent of the respondents told that the cleanliness of the wards and more particularly toilets was poor.

Overall quality

Around 85 per cent of the respondents are satisfied regarding medical treatment provided to them. This is an encouraging opinion on SVIMS. About 67 per cent of the respondents are satisfied with the SVIMS. This is a happy trend. About 88 per cent of the outpatients expressed the view that the overall quality of the hospital is good.

5. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above study, the suggestions made are as follows:-

- As there is a wide gap between the growth of employees and the increase of patients, the management may take steps to recruit the staff regularly.

- Efficient doctors should be recruited and should be retained by providing suitable service conditions to them The new generations of doctors should be trained and value of empathic care and soft skill must be re-emphasized
- The training facilities should be increased so that the employees may extend the services in accordance with the changing health scenario.
- The waiting time for initial treatment is lengthy, hence waiting time must be minimized to make the patients mentally and physically happy.
- Regarding medicines, respondents opined that all medicines are not available in SVIMS pharmacy. Hence it is suggested to make all required medicines available at SVIMS.
- The cleanliness of toilets should be improved. It may be done twice a day
- suitable measures should be taken to improve food services and quality

6. CONCLUSION

On the whole, their observations may be summarized as follows:-

Positive Aspects

Quality and behavior of doctors

Courtesy of the staff

Behavior of nurses.

Negative features

delay in admission procedure

Cleanliness

Quality of the food

Explanation about disease and treatment and rules and regulations

It was noticed in the present study that most of the respondent patients are satisfied with most of the services in the SVIMS. However there also negative aspects which should be rectified. To conclude, if the suitable remedial measures are taken, better services may be rendered to the needy patients and thereby the efficiency of the institution will be shot up to a large extent.

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