

Maternal satisfaction and awareness regarding pediatric services at a tertiary hospital in Southwestern Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Satisfaction of health service user is the most important aim for health provider. We observed and heard many dissatisfactory comments among people utilizing health services in Aseer Central Hospital, Saudi Arabia which led us to conduct this study to verify these comments.

Methods: During a 12-month period (April 2001 - March 2002) we undertook a systematic sample collection on every 7th mother upon discharge through an Arabic speaking nurse. Participants answered questionnaires; and we encoded and analyzed the result using SPSS software package.

Results: One hundred ninety-seven mothers completed the study. There were 93 female and 104 male patients. Mothers rated the satisfaction regarding health services at

the Pediatric Department as excellent (71.6%), very good (20.3%) and bad (1%). Ninety-seven percent of mothers feel that the treating physician was in close contact with them, and the nature of disease was explained to them by the treating physician in 78.7% of the cases. Other parameters were tested including using the hospital as training facilities for the student as well as cleanliness and food services. All of which received satisfactory rating.

Conclusion: This study confirms mother's satisfaction regarding health services provided to them which is contrary to the belief of the community. It also supports the fact that using hospital for teaching purposes does not affect the mother's satisfaction.

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Health services in Aseer region Southwestern Saudi Arabia is delivered through a wide network of 208 Primary Health Care Centers (PHCCs), 15 secondary care referral hospitals as well as a Tertiary hospital. There are approximately 100 beds allocated for general pediatric as well as pediatric surgery. Ideally, the patient should be seen at PHCCs first and referred to a higher level as per patient's situation. Satisfaction of health care recipients has been studied at the primary health care level in Aseer region and other part of the region of Saudi Arabia.¹⁻⁴ Data regarding parents satisfaction and awareness regarding pediatric

hospital health services in Aseer region are scarce and even lacking. Literature review of patient satisfaction showed that the characteristics of health care delivery that influence patient satisfaction were accessibility of care, continuity, humaneness, informativeness and thoroughness.⁵⁻⁹ The aim of the present work is to study satisfaction and awareness of mothers (the regular companion of the child) regarding health services provided to the admitted children at ACH.

Methods. During a 12-month period (from April 2001 to March 2002) and upon discharge from

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pediatric ward, a systematic sample on every 7th mother was interviewed upon discharge by an Arabic speaking nurse. Tools used in the present study were structural interview questionnaire. The questionnaire includes residence, data regarding parental level of education, satisfaction regarding health services in the emergency and in the pediatric ward, food quality, cleanliness of the ward, nursing, and so forth. It also focuses on their knowledge regarding children disease, accessibility to the doctor to answer their questions. Some of them emphasize the role of the hospital as a teaching hospital and the satisfaction regarding presence of the student during the admission time. The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study and necessary verbal modifications were made before implementing the questionnaire. Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS software package.

Results. During the assigned period, 197 mothers completed the study. There were 93 female and 104 male patients with a mean age of 2.74 ± 2.73 years. The average stay in the hospital was 6.69 ± 5.24 days. High education level was observed among fathers, the illiteracy rate was 42.6% among mothers versus 7.6% among fathers. University education was 30% among fathers compared with 7%. The satisfaction regarding health services at pediatric department was rated (**Table 1**). The health services in emergency department were also rated by mothers as excellent, very good, good (**Table 1**). Mothers were aware regarding the name of the treating physician in 81.7% of cases. They were also aware regarding different meaning of health providers rank as follows: consultant 76.6%, specialist 86.6%, and resident 59.9%. Attitude towards students training was summarized in **Table 2**. The presence of the student in the ward was annoying for 50.8% of the mother but on the other hand 44.2% did not feel so. The nationality of health provider was not important in 53.3% of cases while 41.1% prefer Saudi national, and 5.6% prefer non-Saudi. Fifty-four percent of mothers prefer Saudi nurse while 3.6% prefer non-

Saudi and 42.1% felt that it did not matter to them. Ninety-seven percent of mothers felt that the treating physician was in close contact with them and 78.7% of the treating physician explained the disease to the family. Mothers (56.9%) were aware regarding their child illness while 43.1% did not know the disease upon admission. Approximately 86.6% of the doctors will respond in due time when called while 12.5% were late and 35.5% of mothers did not require to call for help during admission. Nursing services were graded as excellent by 53.3%, very good by 37.6%, good by 6.1% and average by 3%. The level of cleanliness of the ward was graded between excellent and very good by 35.5%, good 22.8%, average 26.4% and bad by 6.6%. The quality of provided food was rated excellent and very good by 55.9%, good 31.5%, average 9.6%, and bad by 3%. Ninety-seven of mothers when asked if their children need admission in future said they prefer ACH as the first choice even if a similar hospital is available while 1.5% say no and 1.5% not sure.

Discussion. Although there are several approaches to the evaluation of health service satisfaction, the care received is a commonly used measure.¹⁰⁻¹² In our study, satisfaction with health services was the criterion for quality assessment. Other factors incorporated in this study included the use of the hospital as training vicinity and testing mother knowledge and attitude toward health care providers. Approximately 92% of the mothers expressed their satisfaction regarding services provided by the pediatric ward and 86% regarding services provided by the emergency department. Similar satisfaction rate of 94% were reported among children attending well-child clinic by Hafllon et al¹³ and Garcia Duran et al¹⁴ in patient attending day surgery treatment for their relatives. Aasland et al¹⁵ reported most parents and patients with inflammatory rheumatic diseases were satisfied with health care. Dawson and Mogridge¹⁶ reported satisfaction rate of 86% among parents of

Table 1 - Satisfaction with health services provided in Emergency and Pediatric Department expressed in percentage.

Rating	Emergency Department	Pediatric Department
Excellent	44.7	71.6
Very good	41.6	20.3
Good	13.7	7.1
Bad	-	-
Total	100	100

Table 2 - Attitude towards student training.

Choice	Agree to use the hospital to train student	Agree to use her child for student's training
Yes	59.9	46.7
No	10.2	53.3
Not sure	29.9	-
Total	100	100

children admitted to the pediatric ward. In this study, approximately 60% of mother support the use ACH for training student but 46% did not want their children to be used for teaching students. This observation may be in part due to the belief that students and residents still do not have enough experience to deal with patients. Wells et al¹⁷ reported that patients treated by residents at teaching hospital compared with private practicing pediatrician were likely to receive better care and appropriate investigations with less frequency of readmission after discharged. Ninety-seven percent of the mothers when asked if their child needs admission in the future said that they would choose ACH indicating that they were happy regarding health services provided even if similar hospital was available on the region.

This study confirms to the mother satisfaction regarding health services provided to them which is to the contrary of the belief of the community. It also support that using hospital for teaching purpose does not affect mother's satisfaction.

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