

# Study on patient satisfaction in the Government Urban Health Posts (UHPs) of Hyderabad district, Andhra Pradesh.

## **Introduction**

A research on patient satisfaction can be an important tool to improve the quality of services. Patient satisfaction with the health care services largely determines their compliance with the treatment and thus contributes to the positive influence on health. Patient (consumer) satisfaction is one of the established yardsticks to measure success of the services being provided in hospitals. In other words understanding patient satisfaction has many purposes. For example, interviews with patients on the quality of health services provide help to evaluate health care services from the patient's point of view, facilitate the identification of problem areas, and help generate ideas towards resolving these problems. This study was therefore undertaken with the aim to find out the level of patient satisfaction with the various aspects of health care provided in two urban health posts (UHPs) in Hyderabad district. Being the capital city of Andhra Pradesh, it leads in the provision of health care to its people. It has various health care facilities providing different levels of health care.

## **Materials and Methods**

The field work for this study was conducted during September 2010 and took place in two purposively selected UHPs (Zambagh Park and Darulshifa). The aim of the study is to understand patient satisfaction with quality of health care provided at urban health posts. Patients were also asked to make recommendations for improving the delivery of services at the hospital. As the aim of the study was to highlight subjective experiences of patients, a qualitative method was chosen for this study. Several authors have argued that qualitative approach is highly useful to explore patients perceptions about UHPs, and as well as their opinion regarding accessibility of health services, waiting time, diagnostic services, clinical consultations and drug prescription. Patients were given freedom and this provided them with the opportunity to explain in their own words what they were satisfied or dissatisfied with, and to suggest changes that could improve the situation.

Patients were selected using simple random sampling. Semi-structured interview schedule was used for the collection of data, and in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face with 20 patients (15 males and 5 females). 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. A small pilot test of 5 patients was carried out prior to the field work. Changes in wording and sequencing of interview questions were made and questionnaire was shortened as a result of pilot study. Each interview session lasted from 30 minutes to one and half hours. Patients were given freedom and flexibility to express their opinions quality of services provided. Field notes were taken extensively. Qualitative data was recorded immediately by filling up interview schedule. Data is analysed using the general principles of grounded theory.

### **Case Study of Two Urban Health Posts (Zambagh Park & Darulshifa)**

An Urban Health post (UHP) is a health centre located in an urban areas and functions as an equivalent for the primary health centres (PHCs) in the districts. In Hyderabad, there are around 68 UHPs in 7 circles of the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad. Other than UHPs, there are 5 maternity centres which are open 24 hours. The UHPs cater to women, men and children. The UHPs are headed by a Medical Officer, PHNs (Public Health Nurse) and ANMs (Auxillary Nurse Midwife). Most of UHPs have an attached government allopathy, homeopathy or unani dispensary. Immunization services are provided every Wednesday and antenatal check-ups are done Fridays. Daily operating hours being 9 am to 3pm. Each UHP serves the entire population in the area through outreach sessions during which the medical officer as well nurses visit houses campaigning, providing information, following case treatments, etc. Each UHP caters to a population of about 55,000 to 60,000.

The health services provided by the UHPs including diagnosing the cases of tuberculosis, malarial, filarial, leprosy, gastro enteritis/diarrhea, etc., and looking out for high-risk patients and areas. In addition to detecting cases and reporting, they conduct campaigns and educative sessions on HIV, malaria, dengue, acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, etc. The other family welfare services include antenatal check-ups and post-

natal check-ups. High risk women are identified and referred to other hospitals and follow-ups are done by the ANMs. Diseases affecting children like measles, acute respiratory infections, neonatal tetanus, etc., are identified and treated. There are no facilities for conducting laboratory tests in the UHPs.

### **Zambagh Park & Darulshifa UHP**

Zambagh park UHP is located Bahadurapura mandal of Hyderabad district. It covers a population of 50,000. Darulshifa UHP is located in Bahadurapura mandal of Hyderabad district, and covers a population of 65,000. Both the UHPs are headed by a medical officer, one PHN and 5 ANMs. Both areas are surrounded by middle and lower middle class people. There are 12 -25 slums in each UHP. Generally people visiting the UHP are from the surrounding area. There are at least 60-70 patients visit these UHPs per day. Patients usually come for several types of ailments such as antenatal care, post natal care, treatment of cold, cough, fever, urinary tract infections, back pains, arthritis, headaches, gastro problems, vomiting, stomach aches, fungal infections, contraceptions, scabies, toothaches, B.P., menstrual disorders, etc.

### **Results**

Patients views on accessibility of services, waiting time, doctor's and health care workers explanation of illness, health care worker's attitude towards the patients, availability of diagnostic facilities and medicines, and cleanliness of toilets were recorded during the interviews the results are presented in terms of percentages.

- UHPs are accessible (83%),
- Waiting time less than 30 minutes (>80%)
- Doctor has gives time to explain the health problems - Yes (22%); No (78%)
- Health care workers are sympathetic towards the problems of the patient Yes (26%); No (74%). Many patients expressed dissatisfaction with the attitudes and behaviors of health care workers
- Diagnostic facilities - Good (2%); Poor (98%);
- Required medicines are available on hospital premises - Yes (16%); No (84%)

- Toilets are not clean (87%)

## **Discussion & Recommendations**

The results of this study indicate that most of the patients interviewed were not satisfied with the services they received at UHPs. Absence of diagnostic facilities resulted in high dissatisfaction (92%). Almost all the patients attending UHPs wanted diagnostic facilities in UHPs. The satisfaction regarding the listening of the complaints and the behavior of the doctors and nursing staff was poor. The poor satisfaction at the UHP services might result in loss of faith and non-compliance with the treatment. Improvement of the skills of doctor-patient communication and other relevant areas would go a long way to enhance the level of the satisfaction of the patients. Diagnostic facilities need to be provided to enhance the satisfaction of the patients. In this changed environment patient becomes focal point. Hence, the UHPs must strive for maximum patient satisfaction and provide patient oriented service. Satisfaction gives confidence in the patient in facing the diseases. There is a imperative need to communicate effectively with the patients about their disease and the treatment specially the large ignored and the most efficient preventive aspect to allay fears, remove misconceptions, comply with the treatment and develop confidence in the health in the health system achieving the standards of good health. The findings of the survey are quite helpful if they are transformed into action for improving the quality of health care.

Many patients made specific complaints and recommendations, including: a plea for service providers to be gentle and refrain from using insensitive language when responding to patients' questions. Patient dissatisfaction with the attitudes of health personnel is an important weakness that needs to be addressed. Health care workers yet to view the patient as a consumer who has legitimate expectations and concerns, let alone as a customer who can assess the delivery of health care services and make valid conclusions about the quality of care rendered to themselves. Health care workers should recognize that the most powerful predictor for client satisfaction with government health services was the providers' behaviour towards patients, particularly respect and politeness.

Patients are denied the elements of responsiveness and personal attention because of their perceived subordinate status compared to that of providers. A specific recommendation relates to the need to encourage the staff to treat patients with courtesy and respect in line with the Health Sector Reforms and patient centred quality assurance. Patients should not be expected to be grateful for whatever is done to/for them. They are customers whose concerns need to be taken into account. The fact that majority of the patients expressed dissatisfaction with the services indicates that MNH needs to do more in the drive towards improving service stations in order to improve efficiency and quality of the service to the patients.