

ABSTRACT

Quality in health care services is an inevitable part in the service delivery of patients. Outpatient department is the entry point to curative care. Therefore the objective of this study was to assess the quality of services of outpatient departments of selected primary healthcare institutions in Kalutara district. As per the context of government policy, it has been decided to absorption of estate hospitals to national health care system, Assessment of service quality in existing absorbed estate hospitals is a needed requirement. So the study was focused only on these existing estate hospitals.

The study was a descriptive cross sectional study. The study consisted of five specific objectives. The first specific objective aimed to describe socio demographic factors of patients attending to outpatient departments. Second one attempted to describe the SERQUAL modal with respect to primary health care institutions. Third specific objective was to find out the expectation of service quality by patients. Fourth one aimed to find out the perception of service quality by patients. Last specific objective aimed to identify gap between expected and perceived service quality of patients.

Methodology: Parasuraman's SERQUAL model with its five dimensions was used to assess service quality in this study. The pre tested check list was used to describe SERQUAL model in relation to primary health care institutions. A pre tested interviewer administrated questionnaire was applied on 422 randomly selected patients in these settings. The response rate was 95.5%.Collected data were compiled and analyzed by using SPSS. Statistical analysis includes descriptive analysis, reliability testing, independent sample t-test and one way ANOVA.

Results: Validity and reliability was established. Majority of patients were attending to these hospitals are married Sinhalese male patients from rural areas. The study observed space availability for waiting areas, Up to date equipment and human resources were found to be deficient.

The results of the study indicated that highest mean score for expectation was recorded in Tangible dimension (5.774) and lowest score for Assurance dimension. The highest perception mean score was recorded in reliability dimension (5.033) and lowest score (4.309) for Tangibility.

Highest gap between expectation and perception belonged to Tangibility (1.4648) and lowest gap to reliability dimension (-0.7396). The result on overall quality of services provided at outpatient departments of the study setting is poor quality. According to the result, significant gap observed in service quality (-0.943).

Conclusion: The significant difference observed in the patient's expectations and perceptions by government absorbed estate hospitals in five dimensions of service quality.

Recommendation: Repeated and periodic evaluation of service quality at the same study setting by using SERQUAL model will help to assess the trends in service quality gap and improve the quality of health care and overall patient's satisfaction. This type of studies should be done in other plantation district.