

Abstract

Introduction: Patient-centred care is considered an essential aspect of quality. Studying the patient experience, collecting their feedback and determining whether their expectations are met will provide insight into evidence-based decisions and a deep understanding of the utilization of the health service.

Objective: To determine the patient experience and the service utilization factors at medical clinics of Base Hospital Kalmunai North (BHKN) and Ashraff Memorial Hospital (AMH).

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among patients attending medical clinics at BHKN and AMH, with a sample of 146 at BHKN and 145 at AMH. An interviewer administered a questionnaire, an observation chart and a waiting time data sheet were used as study instruments.

Results: BHKN and AMH serve a similar number of patients and provide similar services, but BHKN has better infrastructure, while AMH has more human resources. A higher proportion of Tamil patients were attending the medical clinic of BHKN, and Muslims were high in AMH (χ^2 (df=2) = 79.19; p=0.000). The patient's experience is not influenced by age, sex, or ethnicity. The total waiting times of both hospital clinics differ significantly (t (df=289) = (-3.26); $p \leq 0.05$), especially the waiting time for registration, the waiting time for consultation and the consultation time with the doctor. And also, a significant difference in the experience on communication with the doctor (t (df=289) = 6.78; $p = 0.000$), communication with nurses (t (df=273.36) = 2.64; $p = 0.009$), available services (t (df=289) = 2.98; $p=0.003$) and in basic amenities (t (df=289) =10.39; $p = 0.000$) were observed. Patients of BHKN reported a more positive experience than those in AMH. Patients' responses regarding the reasons for selection were more positive toward BHKN than toward AMH.

Conclusion and recommendation: The majority of people of Tamil ethnicity were utilizing the medical clinic of BHKN and Muslims in AMH. Age, sex and ethnicity didn't influence patient experience. Significant differences were observed in patients' experiences between these hospitals in waiting times, communication with doctors, and available facilities and basic amenities, ultimately providing BHKN patients with a more positive overall experience. Significant differences in experience didn't influence the utilization of the clinics. It is recommended to improve the registration area and the toilet facilities of the AMH medical clinic.

Keywords: Patient experience, Service utilization