

Awareness of Patients’ on Health Care Services: A Study of Private Multi – Speciality Hospitals in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The main objective of the study is to measure the awareness of patients about healthcare services offered by private multi - speciality hospitals in Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu. The data were collected from both In- Patients and Out-Patients through pre-structured interview schedules. The data were analyzed by using SPSS version 22.0. The awareness of the patients about healthcare services is evaluated by “Descriptive Analysis”. It is concluded that One-third of the patients knew about the health care services and charges of the hospital through friends and relatives. The management of the hospitals has to initiative suitable steps to organize awareness programmes such as health education programmes, health camps etc., to increase the awareness of the patients.

Introduction

The awareness towards services offered by private multi-speciality hospitals has been measured on the basis of their opinion about their awareness factors in the following aspects. The level of awareness of patients about the Hospitals, Services, Charges, Doctors’ Qualifications & Specialization, Preventive Disease Programmes conducted by hospitals and Medical Insurance Schemes & Medical Claim Policy are discussed.

Statement of the Problem

The majority of the population in India lives in the rural areas that are not aware of the diseases generated by water, bad sanitation and food. Further, a majority of people are affected by Heart disease, Tuberculosis, Dengue Fever, AIDS and various cancer diseases etc. In this context, the researcher is interested in undertaking a study and an attempt is made to find out the awareness of Patients’ towards the various services offered and quality measurement of healthcare services provided by private multi - speciality hospitals in Coimbatore District. Based on the issues stated above and development in healthcare services, the researcher has raised the question.

To what extent the patients’ are aware of the various medical services provided, hospital charges, doctors’ qualification and specialization and availability of infrastructure in the Private Multi –Speciality hospitals?

In order to find out the answers for the above questions, the researcher has undertaken the present study. It is hoped that the present study will contribute towards a better understanding of the healthcare services rendered by private multi - speciality hospitals in Coimbatore city. This will also bring out awareness of patients and quality measurement of healthcare services in the study area.

Objectives of the Study

To study the awareness of patients’ towards health care services of the private multi - speciality hospitals and also offer the suitable suggestions to improve the level of awareness.

Research Methodology

Primary Data

The primary data were collected from both In- Patients and Out-Patients through pre-structured interview schedules by personal interview with the patients.

Secondary Data

The secondary data are collected from books, journals and articles.

Sample Size

This study is based on Convenience Sampling method. Private Multi- Speciality hospitals having bedding strength of above 300 were selected for the study. Six such hospitals exist in Coimbatore District and are located in Coimbatore City. These six hospitals selected for the study are G.Kuppusamy Naidu Memorial Hospital (GKNMH), KG Hospital, Kovai Medical Center and Hospital (KMCH), Kongunad Hospital, PSG Hospital, Sri Ramakrishna Hospital.

Sample size was designed on the basis of sample size calculator using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where,

n = Sample size

p = The probability value for ‘p’ is not known, if past information not available it can simply set the value of ‘p’ to 0.5.

q = (1 – p) = 0.5.

Z = Confidence level of 95%, with Z Value of 95% is 1.96

E = Tolerance level of error is 0.04, i.e., 4% of error is estimated.

$$N = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5) (1-0.5)}{(0.04)^2} = 600.25 \text{ i.e., } 600.$$

The sample size of 600 respondents (Patients) were selected from the above selected hospitals by applying Disproportional (Non- Proportional) sample size under stratified random sampling technique i.e., an equal number 100 respondents (Patients) have selected from each stratum (hospitals) regardless of their existence in the population. In all the six hospitals totally 600 patients have selected for the study.

Field Work and Collection of Data

The field work for the study was conducted during the period from July 2017 to December 2017.

Frame work of Analysis

The awareness of the patients about healthcare services provided by the Private Multi – Speciality hospitals are evaluated and analyzed by “Descriptive Analysis” by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22.0) to identify the number of patients under each category and data of the same has been converted into percentage.

Limitations of the Study

The results reported here are subjected to some limitations. The study was conducted in only Coimbatore City of Tamil Nadu State and so data cannot be generalized to apply to the whole of Tamil Nadu State. Furthermore, the study only involved patients in Private Multi – Speciality hospitals and not those in Government or other sector, so the findings cannot be said to apply to all patients in Tamil Nadu State.

Awareness of the Patients’ on Healthcare Services - Results and Discussion

The awareness towards services offered by private multi-speciality hospitals has been measured on the basis of patients’ opinion about their awareness factors such as Patients’ awareness about the hospitals, their services and charges based on sources of information. The awareness of the patients’ towards qualifications of the doctors, programmes on preventive diseases and medical insurance schemes and patients awareness on the availability of major types of insurance schemes/ mediclaim policies are discussed.

1. Patients’ Awareness about the Hospitals, their Services and Charges based on Sources of Information

An attempt has made to identify the awareness of patients about the hospitals, their services and charges based on sources of information. For the purpose of analysis the sources of information are classified into six categories viz., proximity to residence, medical professionals, friends and relatives, advertisement media, ex-patients and free health camps and exhibitions. The awareness of the patients about hospitals, their services and charges are presented in table 1.

Table 1 Patients’ Awareness about the Hospitals, their Services and Charges based on Sources of Information

S.No.	Sources of information	No. of Patients	Percentage
1.	Proximity to residence	192	32.0
2.	Medical professionals	94	15.7
3.	Friends & relatives	203	33.8
4.	Advertisement media	40	6.7
5.	Ex-patients	54	9.0
6.	Free health camps & exhibitions	17	2.8
	Total	600	100

Source: Compiled from field data

It is observed from table 1 out of total patients taken for the study, 32.0 per cent of the patients were aware of the hospitals and the health care services because of proximity to residence, 15.7 per cent of the patients had known about the healthcare services through medical professionals, 33.8 per cent of the patients were aware of the hospital services and charges through friends and

relatives, 6.7 per cent of the patients were aware of the hospitals, services and charges through advertisement media, 9.0 per cent of the patients had come to know about hospitals through ex-patients who had taken treatment in the hospitals earlier and 2.8 per cent of the patients aware of the health care services through free health camps and exhibitions. It is concluded from the above analysis that majority (33.8%) of the patients were aware of the hospital services and charges through friends and relatives.

2. Awareness of the Patients’ towards Qualifications of the Doctors, Programmes on Preventive Diseases and Medical Insurance Schemes

The role of qualified and specialized doctors plays an indomitable role in the healthcare services sector. However when it is taken up for the study, it is unavoidable to study the awareness of the patients regarding the qualifications and specializations of the Doctors of the hospitals concerned. Hence it has been analyzed that how far patients’ awareness on doctors qualifications and specializations along with the knowledge about Medical Insurance Schemes, and these factors are given below in the Table 2.

Table 2 Awareness of the Patients’ towards Qualifications of the Doctors, Programmes on Preventive Diseases and Medical Insurance Schemes

S.No	Awareness Factors	No. of Patients		
		Yes	No	Total
1.	Doctors’ Qualifications And Specialization	370 (61.70)	230 (38.30)	600 (100.00)
2.	Preventive Diseases Programme Conducted by the Hospitals in the District / Residential areas	233 (38.80)	367 (61.20)	600 (100.00)
3.	Awareness Programmes attended	134 (22.33)	466 (76.67)	600 (100.00)
4.	Medical Insurance Schemes / Medical claim Policy	360 (60.0)	240 (40.0)	600 (100.00)

Source: Compiled from field data, Note: Figures in parenthesis are percentage to total

From the above table it is assessed that out of 600 patients taken for the study, 61.7 per cent of the patients have knowledge about the Doctor’s qualifications and specializations, 38.8 per cent of the patients are aware of the preventive diseases programmes conducted by the hospitals in the district / residential areas, 22.33 per cent of the patients have attended the awareness programme conducted by the hospitals and 60.0 per cent of the patients are aware of the medical insurance schemes / medical claim policies in getting financial reliefs for their health problems. It is concluded from the analysis, that majority (61.7%) of the patients’ had availed healthcare services in private multi-speciality hospitals only after knowing about the Doctor’s qualifications and specializations.

3. Patients Awareness on the Availability of Major Types of Insurance Schemes/Medicaid Policies

In the world today, everyday consumers witness a new product in the insurance sector. As various corporate competing for business from across the world, a new venture is not a wonder. In India, there different brands are targeting the middle and salaried class promoting their healthcare

policies with various attractive schemes. But still there arises a question that how many among the middle/salaried class are aware of these sorts of policies? And hence an attempt has been made by using five categories viz., private insurance companies, public insurance companies, Central/State government employees HF schemes, Tamilnadu Government Chief Minister Health Insurance Scheme for publics and others. Patients’ awareness about medical insurance schemes is present in table 3.

Table 3 Awareness of Patients on Various Types of Insurance Schemes/Medical Claim Policy

(N = 360)

S. No.	Major Types of Insurance Schemes	No. of Patients	Percentage
1.	Private Sector Insurance	46	12.8
2.	Public Sector Insurance	82	22.8
3.	Central / State govt. Employees HF Schemes	55	15.3
4.	TN Govt. CMCHI Scheme for Public	157	43.6
5.	Others	20	5.6

Source: Compiled from field data

It is evident from the above table 3 that 12.8 per cent of the patients ARE aware of private sector insurance schemes, 22.8 per cent of the patients know about public sector insurance schemes such as Medical insurance scheme in Life Insurance Corporation, State Bank of India, etc., 15.3 per cent of the patients are aware of Central/State Government Employees Health Fund Schemes, 43.6 per cent of the patients know about TamilNadu Government Chief Minister Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme for Public and 5.6 per cent of the patients are aware of other medical insurance schemes. It is concluded from the analysis that most (43.6%) of the patients know about TamilNadu Government Chief Minister Health Insurance Scheme for Public.

Findings

1. One-third of the patients knew about the health care services and charges of the hospital through friends and relatives.
2. On knowing the Doctors’ Qualifications and specializations, 61.7%of the patients had availed the healthcare services in private sector.
3. 43.6% of the patients’ knew about TamilNadu Government Chief Ministers’ Health Insurance Scheme for the public.

Recommendations

Creating awareness with the public towards preventive diseases is a must for the private multi-speciality hospitals to survive. Advertising should be made at regular intervals and also whenever new facilities and specialties’ are introduced and reputed physicians are available for consultation at all times in hospitals. Health education programmes, health camps etc., should be organized by the private multi- speciality hospitals as a part of their awareness programmes.

Conclusion

The interaction with the patients would help in getting feedback and resolving the issue to patients’ satisfaction. There is also a need to make the patient aware about the advance technology adopted in medical treatment and pricing strategy adopted for cost of surgery and treatment. Hence,

the management of the hospitals has to initiative these suitable steps and remedial measures to improve the level of perceptions of the patients on the various quality aspects of healthcare services.

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