

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Waiting Time of the Patients at Medical Outpatient Department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital

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Abstract:

This cross-sectional study was done in the medical outpatient department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital with a view to find out the time in minutes required for an individual patient to receive treatment and the problems faced by them during the period. During the scheduled period of data collection, seventy four adult patients were observed and interviewed. Out of them, 39 were male and 35 were female. The study revealed that average total waiting time for patients attending medical outpatient department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital was 66.64 minutes. The mean time taken to get treatment ticket was 13.69 minutes (± 4.06 minutes), time taken to attend the physician was 7.51 minutes (± 0.9 minutes), and time spent in the laboratories was 34.54 minutes (± 7.03 minutes) (this time did not include the time needed for getting the investigation reports). Time spent for getting medicine including instructions was 10.90 minutes (± 1.05 minutes).

Introduction:

Delivery of health services is an organized public or private effort that assists individuals, primarily in regaining health, but also in preventing diseases and disabilities. When the pattern of illnesses in a community is looked at as a whole, it would be observed that relatively few diseases are severe enough to confine the patients to hospital beds. Because of great volume of ambulant patients in most communities, an efficient outpatient department (OPD) in hospitals or health

centres clearly of critical importance. This is more because of lower cost of outpatient services compared to in-patients¹.

The OPD is the point of contact between the hospital and the community. Many patients gain their first impression about the hospital at the outpatient department. In most developing countries, the outpatient department is overcrowded. Prior appointments cannot be made, patients are mixed together and any attempt to impose rules fails before such a huge attendance².

When patients come to hospital for treatment, they loss their valuable time which ultimately cause many more difficulties. So, increased waiting time causes a negative impact on patient's satisfaction³. Concept of patient's waiting time differs among different people. It is revealed that there is significant difference between the patients and their physicians view of patient's waiting time in outpatient care and

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perspective to improve the situation⁴. As majority of the people come in contact with the OPD services of the hospitals so it is the area of importance to satisfy and address the peoples demand accordingly and in an effective way⁵.

Waiting time is the time required just after patient's arrival at OPD to meet his health needs/demands. It is the total time elapsed in circulating the patient from one room to another. These include the time spent for collecting the treatment ticket, time to attend the physician, time spent for submission of samples for investigations and time spent for collecting medicines including receiving instructions for their use. Patient's waiting depends on many factors including efficiency, sincerity and punctuality of the health care providers as well as the existing facilities of the institution⁶.

Different studies have been done on public hospitals mainly at emergency departments and inpatient departments, but not as much at OPD of a government health care facility like Dhaka Medical College Hospital which is situated in the centre of Dhaka city. This study was designed as an attempt to collect baseline information in this regard. The result of this study may help the managers and health policy makers to plan, organize, implement and control the organizations like hospitals effectively and efficiently.

Materials and method:

This cross-sectional study was done during the period of the working days of May 2004 at the medical OPD of Dhaka Medical College Hospital with a view of its catchment coverage in national health care delivery system to assess the quality of clinical care being provided by it in terms of time

utilization. Study population were the patients of adult ages, both male and female, attending medical outpatient department during working hours of the period of data collection.

Non-probability sampling technique was adopted in this study. The sampling units were selected purposively. Total 74 respondents of which 39 males and 35 females constituted the sample. An interview schedule, questionnaire check lists and observations were used as research instruments.

Permission was obtained from the concerned authority before undertaking the study. Respondents were told about the purpose of the study before interviewing. After collection, data were checked, compared and verified to exclude any inconsistency and to reduce error. These were then compiled and tabulated in a master sheet, and analyzed and processed by SPSS.

Results:

The study revealed that the total average waiting time for patients attending medical OPD of Dhaka Medical College Hospital was 66.64 minutes. Time taken to get treatment ticket was 13.69 minutes (± 4.06 minutes), time taken to attend physician was 7.51 minutes (± 7.03 minutes), and time spent for getting medicine including instructions was 10.90 minutes (± 1.05 minutes). Results are mentioned in following tables.

Table-I shows the average time required by respondents to get treatment ticket and it was 13.69 minutes (± 4.06 minutes). More time was taken during the rush hours between 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Less time was required at the later part of the day.

Table-I: Distribution of respondents by time taken to get treatment ticket (n=74)

| Time taken (in minutes) | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| <10 | 32 | 43.20 |
| 11-15 | 18 | 24.30 |
| 16-20 | 15 | 20.30 |
| >21 | 09 | 12.20 |
| Total | 74 | 100.0 |

Above table shows that each respondent spent on an average 7.51 minutes (± 0.9 minutes) to attend the physician after getting the treatment ticket. Fifty three respondents (71.60%) spent 7-9 minutes for this purpose, 19 (25.70%) spent less than six minutes and two (2.70%) respondents spent more than nine minutes to attend the physicians.

minutes (± 7.03 minutes). This time was required only for giving samples to the laboratories and gets other investigations like x-ray, ECG, etc. done. This time did not include the time required for getting the investigation results.

Table-IV shows that average time required for getting medicine and instructions by the

Table-II: Distribution of respondents by time to attend the physician after getting the treatment ticket (n=74)

| Time required (in minutes) | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| <6 | 19 | 25.70 |
| 7-9 | 53 | 71.60 |
| >9 | 02 | 2.70 |
| Total | 74 | 100.00 |

Above table shows that average time required for investigation procedure was about 34.54

respondents was 10.90 minutes (± 1.05 minutes). Almost half of the respondent i.e. 36

Table-III: Distribution of respondents by time spent to attend laboratories and get investigations done (n=74)

| Time in minutes | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------------------|------------|
| <25 | 10 | 13.51% |
| 26-30 | 15 | 20.27% |
| 31-35 | 20 | 27.03% |
| 36-40 | 09 | 12.16% |
| 41-45 | 12 | 16.22% |
| >46 | 08 | 10.81% |
| Total | 74 | 100% |

(48.60%) spent time between 10-12 minutes while 23 (31.10%) respondents spent more than 12 minutes for this purpose.

department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital and its influencing factors.

Patients require several activities to perform at

Table-IV: Distribution of respondents by time spent for getting medicines and receive instructions (n=74)

| Time spent for getting medicine (in minutes) | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|--|-----------------------|------------|
| <9 | 15 | 20.30 |
| 10-12 | 36 | 48.60 |
| >12 | 23 | 31.10 |
| Total | 74 | 100.00 |

Above table shows the average waiting time of the respondents attending at the medical OPD of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Cumulative time, expressed in minutes,

the medical OPD of Dhaka Medical College Hospital at the time of receiving treatment. The calculation of time was made according to stepwise sequence of activities. Adding mean time of different activities, a patient required

Table-V: Total waiting time of the respondents at medical outpatient department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital

| Activities | Mean time required in minutes |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Taking treatment ticket | 13.69 |
| To attend physician's room | 7.51 |
| Getting medicine and instructions | 10.90 |
| Investigation procedures | 34.54 |
| Total time required | 66.64 |

required for different types of events that happened for diagnosis and getting treatment for their medical problems was 66.64 minutes.

Discussion:

This cross sectional study on waiting time of the patients attending medical OPD of Dhaka Medical College Hospital was conducted for a period of one month. Questionnaire and check list were appropriately designed for the study. Objectives of the study were to find out patients, waiting time at medical outpatient

66.64 minutes on average as waiting time.

Afzal in his study showed that patients, waiting time at medical OPD was 2.35 hours at Rabeta Hospital, Cox's Bazar⁷. This study included the consultation time with the physician as well as the time taken for the investigations. But in the present study, time spent in the physician's room was not calculated as that time was consultation time and was not considered as waiting time. Zakir found waiting time of 21.11% of OPD patients of Dhaka Medical College Hospital to be more than four hours⁸. Study place was surgery

OPD. He included the consultation time as waiting time. But in this study consultation time was not considered as waiting time, so the waiting time of this present study is shorter. According to standard operating procedures of OPD for district level hospitals, waiting time for collection of ticket is one minute, waiting time for registration at the concerned OPD is two minutes and 2-3 minutes waiting time for dispensing medicines, and time for submission of samples for investigations is 10 minutes⁹. In comparison to the above mentioned standard waiting time, the findings of this present study shows that it is rather longer. The number of patients are more but the number of facilities are less here, so the doctor-patient ratio, and patient recourses are higher than any district level hospital. Eventually the waiting time was found longer in this study.

Other factors which caused longer waiting time were mainly difficulties in locating rooms, rush, no one to help, etc. Most of these problems could be overcome with little efforts from the part of health care providers. Appropriate markings showing directions, sympathetic approach of the staffs, and increased number of manpower would have minimized these problems and ultimately reduced the waiting time¹⁰.

In conclusion, it may be said that at the medical OPD of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, patients come from different parts of Dhaka as well as from different parts of the country. They represent different age groups, sexes, occupations, religions and incomes. The study revealed that there were some problems faced by the patients which had some influence on the waiting time. By adopting some measures one could easily minimize these problems.

These include more manpower, sympathetic approach, strict adherence to the time by the health care providers of all levels, introducing proper sign posting, more investigation facilities, among others.

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