

Patient Satisfaction with Outpatient Physiotherapy Services in Dhulikhel Hospital, Kathmandu University Hospital, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Background

The quality of care provided to recipients of health services is measured by the satisfaction of patient. Patient satisfaction is the extent to which patient feels that their needs and expectations have been met on behalf of their expenses made to get quality health services. Satisfied patients adhere to the treatment plan, seek for further services and provide feedback. Therefore, such study in Nepal would be important and first of its kind to assess the quality of physiotherapy services.

Objective

To evaluate the level of satisfaction of patient receiving outpatient Physiotherapy services and the relationship between the items within the questionnaire.

Method

The MedRisk Instrument for Measuring Patient Satisfaction (MRPS) with Physical Therapy Care was administered to 256 patients to identify the level of patient satisfaction.

Result

There was a high level of satisfaction of patient receiving Outpatient physiotherapy services using MRPS (Mean = 4.18; SD = 0.39). The relationships between individual item scores and Global satisfaction (Item 11) were explored with bivariate correlation analysis. The Internal factors correlated most strongly with the global satisfaction whereas the external factors had the lowest correlation with the global satisfaction.

Conclusion

Patient satisfaction is an important aspect of the measurement of quality of care. Thus, it must be evaluated timely to provide quality services to the patients. There was high level of satisfaction reported by patient receiving outpatient physiotherapy services in the Dhulikhel Hospital.

KEY WORDS

Outpatient physiotherapy services, Patient satisfaction, Quality care, The MedRisk Instrument

INTRODUCTION

Patient satisfaction is a valid indicator of measurement of quality of care that aids to identify treatment compliance and promote patient centered health care.^{1,2} Patients' views about their health care are considered as one of the three key elements of evidence-based physiotherapy practice.³ Measuring patient satisfaction can be divided into two categories: 'Patient satisfaction with outcome' and 'Patient satisfaction with care'. The former one relates to results of treatment whereas later one reflects the services that patient received and both of them are influenced by different factors.⁴⁻⁶ If patients are satisfied with services, it increases treatment compliance, return for further services, feedbacks and finally helps patient to attain better quality of life. Patient satisfaction incorporates both patient and physiotherapist related factors.^{1,2,7}

Studies suggest that patients with acute conditions, older people and females are more satisfied. Moreover, physiotherapists' skill, knowledge, professionalism, friendly attitude, effective communication, adequate duration and frequency of treatment contribute to higher satisfaction. Patient receiving care from same therapist in every visit are more satisfied than with multiple physiotherapist.^{8,9} For successful treatment programme, a healthy physiotherapist-patient relationship is an important component.¹⁰ Worldwide, due to services available and increasing human resources, patients have many choices to receive best available services.^{1,11} Thus, quality control, performance and competitive markets have raised urgent necessity to assess level of patient satisfaction.^{12,13}

Such studies have not been conducted much in developing countries. Physiotherapy is a fast growing profession in Nepal. Therefore, assessing patient satisfaction with physiotherapy services is very essential.

To evaluate the level of satisfaction of patient receiving Outpatient Physiotherapy services in Dhulikhel Hospital and to evaluate the relationship between the items within the questionnaire.

METHODS

We conducted a descriptive cross sectional study in the outpatient department of Physiotherapy at Dhulikhel Hospital, Kathmandu University Hospital, Nepal from June 2017 to February 2018. Two hundred fifty six patients were recruited in the study for data collection. A non probability convenience sampling method was used. Sample size was determined as per general formula for cross sectional studies.

The MedRisk Instrument for measuring patient satisfaction (MRPS) with physiotherapy care having 12 items developed and approved by MedRisk, Inc was used. This instrument consists of 10 specific items and 2 global items. Items 1 to 3 represent the external factor, while items 4 to 10 represent

the internal factor. Items 11 and 12 are global measures of satisfaction. Patients were instructed to complete a 1 to 5 rating scale for each item (1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neutral; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree). Items 1, 4 and 8 were recoded as positive during scoring. Higher scores represent higher satisfaction.² The questionnaires were translated into Nepali language initially and the pilot study was carried out in 10% of the total population to find out the feasibility and practicability of the tool. Interested participants were first checked for eligibility and then MRPS was administered. In addition to the MedRisk, another questionnaire was used to collect the demographic data.

The study was approved by the Kathmandu University Institutional Review Committee and the written consent were obtained from all 256 participants. To be eligible, participants had to be above 18 years; must have visited outpatient department (OPD) of Physiotherapy for at least three physiotherapy sessions with any conditions. Patients who had cognitive impairment, speech disorder, uncooperative patients were excluded from the study.

Subscale scores were calculated by summing all question scores. The overall score was calculated by calculating the mean of the subscale scores. The higher the score, the higher the level of satisfaction for that subscale, with maximum satisfaction score being 5.¹⁴ For the item assessing the overall level of satisfaction (Global satisfaction-Item 11), response options 1 and 2 were combined to indicate a low level of satisfaction, response option 3 was used to indicate a moderate level of satisfaction, and response options 4 and 5 were combined to indicate a high level of satisfaction.

Patients were advised to complete the questionnaire on their own, although the outcome assessor was available to clarify any questions. As the questionnaire is structured with positive and negative statements, one example of each was shown and explained to the patients before they completed the questionnaire.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 was used for the data analysis. Mean and Standard deviation were calculated for each item of MRPS questionnaire. Bivariate correlation analysis was used to explore the relationships between individual item scores and Global satisfaction.

RESULTS

The total number of participants enrolled for the study was 256. Among them, we observed that 64.8% of the population were referred to physiotherapy through physician followed by relatives (12.9%); friends (11.3%); others as self, television, pamphlets (8.2%); previous patient (2.3%) and least through Internet (0.4%).

The demographic characteristics of samples are shown in Table 1. Majority (91.4%) of the participants visited

physiotherapy OPD for three to six times for the services. In relation to the duration of symptoms, majority of the sample had chronic condition (37.5%) followed by sub acute (36.3%) and rest had an acute condition. Likewise, majority (44.1%) were treated by two therapists for their specific problems; 24.2% by one; 16.8% by three and 14.8% by different therapists.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of sample (N= 256)

Variables	Mean (S.D)
Age (Years)	37.93 (14.66)
Gender, N (%)	
Female	142 (55.5%)
Male	114 (44.5%)
Marital status, N (%)	
Unmarried	76 (29.7%)
Married	180(70.3%)
Education Level, N (%)	
Illiterate	53 (20.7%)
Primary	28 (10.9%)
Higher secondary	33 (12.9%)
Bachelors	60 (23.4%)
Masters	17 (6.6%)
Number of visits, N (%)	
3-6	234 (91.4%)
7-10	14 (5.5%)
11-14	1 (4%)
>14	7(2.7%)
Duration of symptoms, N (%)	
Less than 1 month	67 (26.2%)
1-3 month	93 (36.3%)
More than 3 month	96(37.5%)
Number of therapists, N(%)	
One	62 (24.2%)
Two	113 (44.1%)
Three	43 (16.8%)
Different	38 (14.8%)

Table 2 shows the relationships between individual item scores and Global satisfaction (Item 11) explored with bivariate correlation analysis.

The mean patient satisfaction of the patient receiving outpatient physiotherapy services was 4.18 (SD: 0.39). Mean (SD) satisfaction for the individual MRPS items ranged from 4.33 (0.52) for “My therapist thoroughly explains the treatment(s) I receive” to 4.02 (0.67) for “The waiting area is comfortable”.

The Internal factors correlate most strongly with the global satisfaction. These item includes: My therapist thoroughly explains the treatment I receive (r =0.59, p<0.001), My therapist treats me respectfully (r =0.53, p<0.001), My therapist listens to my concerns (r =0.60, p<0.001), My therapist understands all my question (r

Table 2. Patient satisfaction scores for each MRPS item, and Bivariate correlations between each item and Global satisfaction score.

S.N	MRPS Items	Mean patient satisfaction	Correlation with Global satisfaction (Spearman's r, 95% CI)
1	The registration process is not appropriate.	4.05	0.20
2	The office receptionist is courteous.	4.04	0.36
3	The waiting area is comfortable (in terms of lighting, temperature, decor and furnishings).	4.02	0.28
4	My therapist does not spend enough time with me.	4.20	0.42
5	My therapist thoroughly explains the treatment(s) I receive.	4.33	0.59
6	My therapist treats me respectfully.	4.28	0.53
7	My therapist does not listen to my concerns.	4.20	0.60
8	My therapist understands all my questions.	4.04	0.52
9	My therapist advises me on ways to avoid future problem.	4.23	0.67
10	My therapist gives me detailed instructions regarding my home program.	4.18	0.60
11	Overall, I'm completely satisfied with the services I receive from my therapist	4.25	1
12	I would return to this office for future services and care	4.39	0.60

=0.52, p<0.001), My therapist advises me on ways to avoid future problems (r = 0.67, p<0.001) and My therapist gives me detailed instructions regarding my home program (r= 0.60, p<0.001). Other external factors such as the office receptionist, the waiting area, the reception process had the lowest correlation with the global satisfaction. There was a strong correlation with the item “I would return to this office for future services and care” with the global satisfaction (r=0.66, p<0.001).

DISCUSSION

The study indicated that 65.2% of people were highly satisfied with the physiotherapy services received and the mean item responses were uniformly high. The different items within the questionnaire have different correlation with the global items of patient satisfaction. For instance, we observed that the internal factors correlated most

strongly with the global satisfaction with an average of 4.21 points.

In a study conducted by Potter et al. it has been concluded that communication ability of the physiotherapist was ranked first or second in importance by all groups of patients.¹⁵ Good experiences in physiotherapy were most often attributed to effective communication by the physiotherapist, while bad experiences most often related to dissatisfaction with the service followed by poor physiotherapist communication.¹⁵ In the present study, the explanation of the treatment to the patient has significantly affected the patient satisfaction. Similar to the results of previous studies, this study also demonstrated a significant correlation between treating the patient with respect and their satisfaction with service.^{2,16} Carefully listening to patients and understanding the meanings patients hold about health and illness is one of the strategies of practice by expert physiotherapist to adopt a patient centered approach.^{15,17} There is a significant correlation between physiotherapists listening to patients' concern and their satisfaction with the services in this study which is also supported by the study conducted by Beattie et al.² Therapist answering the patients' questions about their problem also had a significant association with their satisfaction. Beattie et al. has pointed out that patient satisfaction is more related to the degree at which the physiotherapists answered the patients' questions.²

Patient satisfaction is also influenced by non clinical/ external factors.¹⁶ Several studies have found that the patients are more satisfied if access to physiotherapy services is better (location, parking, clinic hours, reception, waiting area) including courteous receptionist, better registration process, low waiting times & but in our study, there is lowest correlation of these items with the global satisfaction with an average of 4.03 points. Similar to this study, other previous studies have also revealed that patients were less concerned with such nonclinical factors.¹¹

Different demographic variables that were used in the study also had some significant association with the patient satisfaction. In the present study, females were found to be more satisfied than males and statistically there was a significant association between the total number of therapists treating the patient and the satisfaction of the services which is similar to the study conducted by Beattie et al. who have concluded that subjects who received their entire course of outpatient physical therapy from only one provider were approximately three times more likely to report complete satisfaction with care than those who received care from more than one provider.¹⁸ The finding of this study on higher patient satisfaction

reported in patients with acute condition compared to chronic condition is similar to previous studies conducted by Hills et al.⁸ Satisfied patients are most likely to actively participate in their treatment, whilst dissatisfied patients may not return for care.¹⁸ This study has shown there was a significant association with return of patient for future services, which is also consistent with the study conducted by Beattie et al. which has reported that satisfied patients will return for treatment when the need arises, and will speak in favorable terms about the treatment and facility.¹⁸ Therefore, it is very important that physiotherapists make efforts to ensure that their patients are satisfied and that if patients are satisfied with the service, they will recommend the services to other customers as well. Thus, client satisfaction can have influence on utilization of services with the word of mouth referrals.

Some limitations of this study should be acknowledged. Due to limited time available for data collection, the convenience sampling was performed. The sample who agreed to participate may have had higher satisfaction levels. Other limitations of this study are that the outcome tool was translated into the local language for the feasibility, but its reliability and validity have not been investigated. Future research could use validated instrument that may give more reliable and valuable findings. The findings of the study cannot be generalized to the other physiotherapy settings like in-patient or ward services as the MedRisk instrument is intended for use in an outpatient physical therapy environment only.

CONCLUSION

Patient satisfaction with physiotherapy treatment is an increasingly important patient centered outcome. Overall, patients were highly satisfied with the physiotherapy services from physiotherapy OPD of Dhulikhel Hospital. These results can serve as a learning tool for physiotherapist as a care provider and a basis to quantify the quality of ongoing physiotherapy services offered at their own hospital. Thus, this kind of assessment should be an ongoing process so as to know and improve the services being delivered by the hospital.

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