

# LEVEL OF SATISFACTION AMONG PATIENTS ATTENDING BASIC HEALTH UNITS IN ABBOTTABAD

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## ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** Over the last two decades Basic Health Units have been emphasized as key outlets for Primary Health Care services in the rural areas of country. Patient's satisfaction have long been considered as important components when measuring health outcome and quality of care. This study was conducted to know the level of satisfaction among patients attending basic health units.

**METHODS:** This cross - sectional study was conducted at Basic Health Units (BHUs) Nawanshehr and Dhamtour, Abbottabad from 1st December 2015 to 31st May 2016. Patients who met inclusion criteria were randomly selected from both BHUs on the day of visit and so 89 study participants were selected. Frequencies and percentages were calculated using SPSS -V 20. MS Excel 2007 was used for plotting graphs.

**RESULTS:** Overall patient had variable experience of attending BHU. Majority of patients (56%) lived in the vicinity of BHU within 5km. As far as the doctor's response was concerned 73% said that response was always good. 61.7% patients agreed that sometimes medicines were available at BHU.

**CONCLUSION:** Primary health care is a key determinant of overall patient's satisfaction attending BHU. Patient's comments suggest that number of concerns must be addressed and quality of services should be improved.

**KEYWORDS:** Primary Health Care, Patient's satisfaction, Health Care Facilities

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades Basic Health Units (BHUs) have been emphasized as key outlets for Primary Health Care (PHC) services in the rural areas of country<sup>1</sup>. Patient's satisfaction have long been considered as important components when measuring health outcome and quality of care<sup>2</sup>. A satisfied patient is more likely to develop a deeper and longer lasting relationship with their medical provider<sup>3</sup>.

Patient's expectations with health providers and health care system

plays a fundamental role in the concepts of patient's satisfaction. Patients experience is a strong predictor of patient's satisfaction. Consumer's Satisfaction is generally considered as the extent to which consumers feel that their needs and their expectations are being met by the service provider. Pakistan government established an extensive network of primary health care facilities to improve accessibilities of the population to the basic health facilities with the main aim of providing equitably effective and accessible health care services at a cost that individuals can afford<sup>4</sup>.

The quality of health care services has various aspects which has suggested six keys dimension of quality or attributes of the quality in health care. Among those attributes efficiency delivering health care in a manner which maximizes resource used, accessibility, delivering of health care that is timely, geographically reasonable and patient oriented into account preferences of services users are important attributes affecting patient's satisfaction regarding quality of services delivery<sup>5</sup>.

Patients are more satisfied with the health care services, if the health system is responsive in term respect of dignity, autonomy and prompt attention and meeting their expectations. Patient expectations which are influenced by the characteristics such as age, social class, education and to lesser extent gender and ethnicity were found to be important predictor of patient's satisfaction in many surveys. However, patient's perceptions and other psychological factors are potentially neglected determinants. In Pakistan, private health care sectors is somehow responsive as indicated by few studies done in local settings but public sector is severely underutilized and there is no concept of quality improvement and quality service provision in government hospitals<sup>4</sup>.

Improvement in the doctor patient communication skills and other relevant areas would go long way to enhance the level of satisfaction of the out patients, considering the fact that most of the patients are drawn to the health facility out of their faith in the existing health system<sup>4</sup>.

Measurements of patient's satisfactions involves multi dimensions aspects of patient's opinion on health care identifying problems in health care and evaluation of health care<sup>4</sup>. The previous work revealed the majority of patients were satisfied with the quality of services provided to them<sup>6</sup>.

A lot of work has been done regarding the evaluation of services being provided at primary health care. In Pakistan, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa an extensive study was done regarding evaluation of primary and secondary

centers showed that overall patient's satisfaction level was high. The areas of highest patient's satisfaction were respectful treatment and courteous staff, presence of qualified staff, receiving information on the medication prescribed, being told when to return and clean waiting areas<sup>6</sup>.

Another study included all three PHC's in Bahour commune. Out patient satisfaction in primary health centers were assessed by pre-designed and pre-tested preformat. Total 200 out patients were interviewed during the study period considering available resource and time. In this (86.5%) out patients attendees were satisfied with the location of primary health centers and (72.5%) were satisfied with the waiting period at these centers (85%) attendees were satisfied with the toilet facilities in PHC's whereas (42%) attendees reported overcrowding in these PHC's and (15.5%) reported about unavailability of safe drinking water<sup>7</sup>.

Another clinical analysis in Karachi reviewed that (77%) patients were satisfied with attitude of PHC staff also (75%) reported that doctors had examined them per their complaints and (57%) patients said that doctors had explained about their illness. Majority (76%) of the patients were satisfied with the treatment offered in these PHC's<sup>7</sup>.

Different researchers have shown that the overall satisfaction of the out patients were found to be good, which is consistent with study conducted in Lucknow by Kumri et al. Inquiries about the waiting area and waiting period in the public health facilities also revealed a high level of satisfaction in the studies. They also documented that the accessibilities to the PHC was satisfactory 88.3% which was also shown. However differences in satisfaction in the term of long waiting time, was shown in studies conducted by Van Uden et al and Mahfouz et al could be attributed to the differences in expectations of the people in those study areas.<sup>4</sup>

In a study conducted by Sodani et al satisfaction towards availability of toilet was 44% that in study by Vanluden 85%. However in the same

study patient's satisfaction towards the quality of drug at PHCs was only 3%.<sup>4</sup>

The doctor patient relationship is an important determinant of the level of satisfaction. Whereas the studies conducted by Leumari et al and Galhotra et al, the satisfaction towards doctors patients relationship was found to be 60.5% and 65% respectively. Likewise the satisfaction towards behavior of the health staff was found to be 82% and 78.3% respectively by Kumari et al and Sodani et al.<sup>4</sup>

Availability of drugs is one of the main issues that satisfied the patients. Most BHU in far flung areas where the only medicine patients can take are those available at the BHU. A study showed that Chandwani 62% of the attendees of primary health centers were satisfied with the availability of the drugs. Another study by that Chandwani satisfaction towards the "health information" was found to be 69.6% which is similar to above mentioned study.<sup>4</sup>

The maternal mortality and infant mortality rate in Pakistan is still very high in spite of improving our maternal and child health services. Millennium development goal 4 and 5 was to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health respectively but at the end of 2015 we have not been able to achieve this goal.

So we want to check in this study whether the services provided at BHU regarding immunization, antenatal and postnatal care are adequate or not and the patients are satisfied with

them or not? At the end we want to see whether the services provided by BHU and level of satisfaction of level of patients with them could be a factor of these high mortalities.

## MATERIAL & METHODS

This cross sectional study was conducted over a period of 6 months from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016. All patients attending the OPD of two Basic Health Units (BHUs), Nawanshehr and Dhamtour, who gave consent were randomly selected. Serious patients, children under 14 years and non willing patients were excluded. A sample of 89 patients was obtained. Interviewer administered questionnaire was used. SPSS version 20 and Microsoft Excel 2007. Confidentiality of the study participants was maintained. Ethical approval was granted by the institutional ethical committee of Women Medical College.

## RESULTS

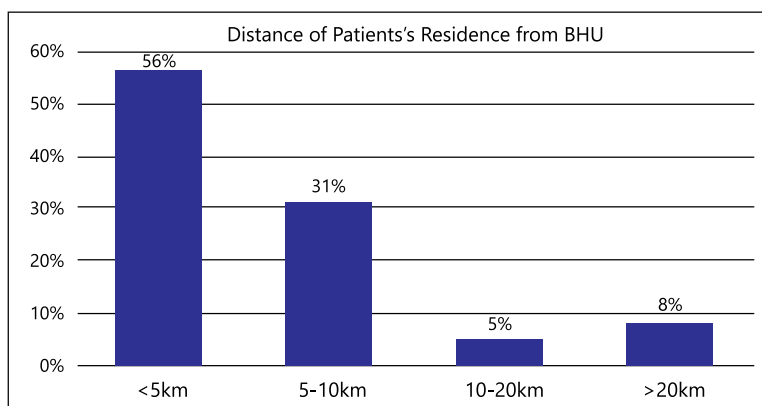


Figure: 1

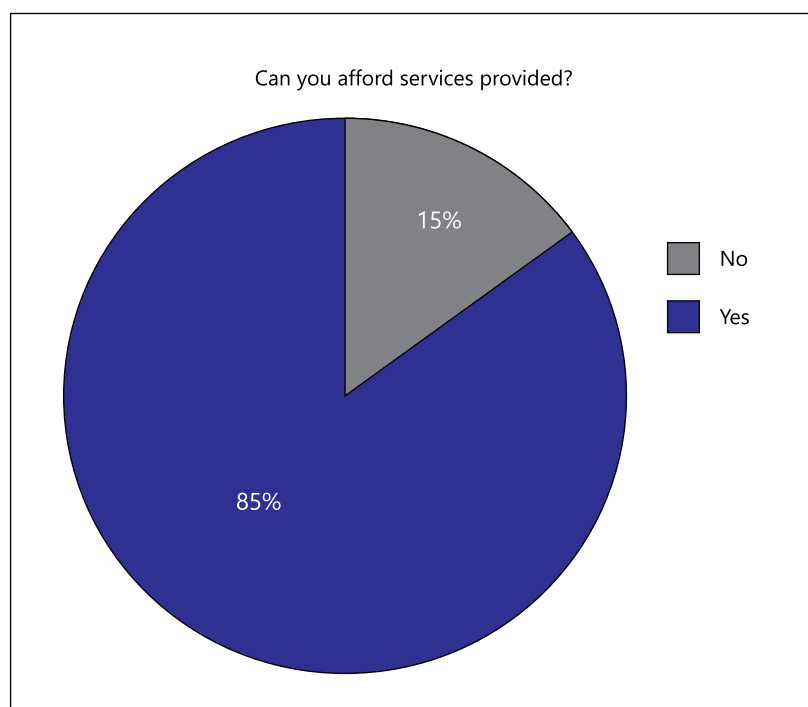


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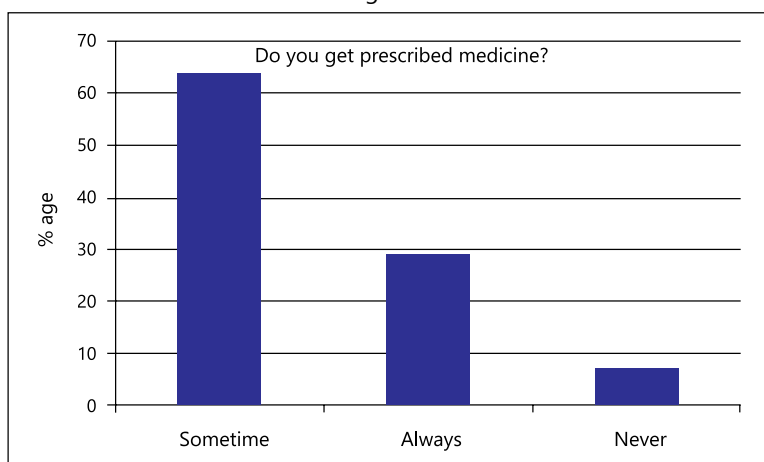


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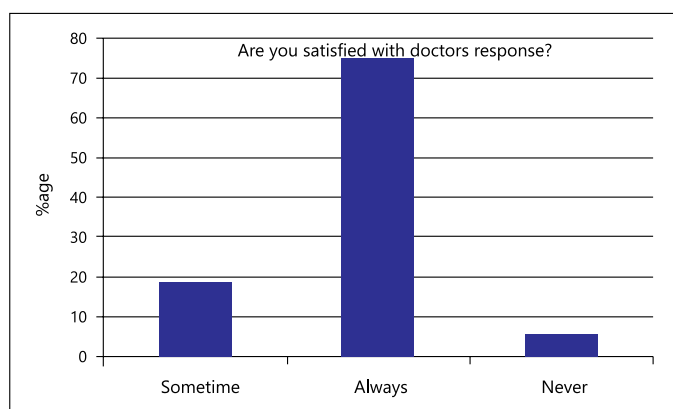


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## DISCUSSION

Patient satisfaction among those attending BHU is important measure of health care. Characteristics of the health care delivery system, which have been shown to play an important role in patient satisfaction with the health care services are affordability, accessibility, availability and equity. Our study finding may be useful in identifying whether the patients attending the BHU are satisfied from the services or not.

In our study majority of patient (56%) attending the BHU lived in the vicinity of the BHU within 5km and only few patients lived far away from the BHU. This is the similar to the study conducted by Mr. Irfan Ali in which showed that 10% patients had residencies within 3km from BHU, so 60% patients reported they walked to BHU and 17% used public transport.<sup>8</sup> Our study also showed that the majority of patients attending BHU were illiterate. This is also similar to the study conducted by Mr. Irfan Ali who showed that primary health care services are mainly used by illiterate (50%) followed by patients with primary (23%) and secondary education (17%) respectively.<sup>8</sup> The occupational status of patients showed that majority of the patients were LHV's, house wives and maids. Only a small percentage were teachers (11%), farmers (6%) and businessman (1%). This is in contrast to the study conducted by Mr. Irfan Ali showed that of all patients attending BHU's (43%) were agricultural laborers, (23%) were service workers, (17%) were farmers and (6%) had their on small shops.<sup>8</sup>

As far as availability of medicines in BHU is concerned our study showed that (64%) patients reported that sometimes medicines were available for them, (29%) patients reported that medicines were always available while (6%) patients reported that medicines were never available. In a study conducted by Chadwani, 62% of the attenders at BHU were satisfied with the availability of drugs.<sup>7</sup>

About 75.2% patients reported that when they want to discuss any problem with the doctor, the doctor often listen to them carefully. 19%

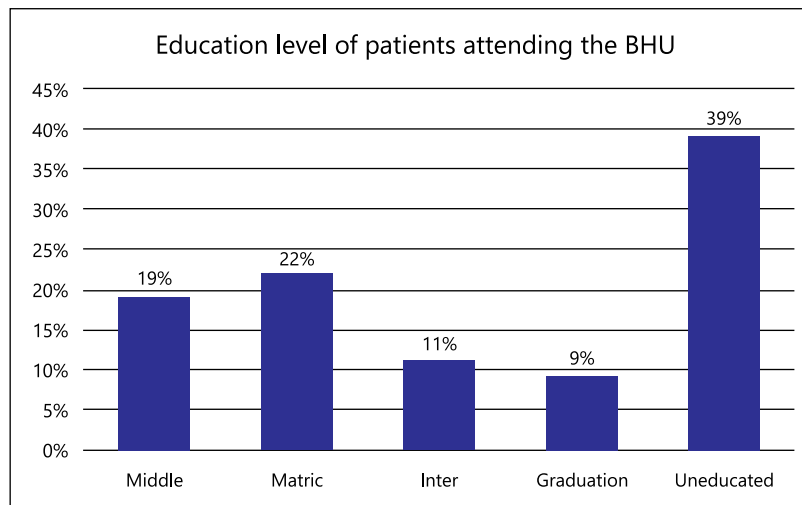


Figure: 5

patients reported that the doctor sometime listens to their complaints while 5.6% patient complaints that the doctor does not to listen them carefully. This is almost similar to the study conducted by Ragunath E that the satisfaction among doctor patient relationship was 57%. Another study conducted by the Kumari et al and Galthora et al, the satisfaction toward doctor patient relationship was found to be 60.5% and 60% respectively.<sup>7</sup>

In order to satisfy patients attending BHU, there should be sufficient waiting area for the patients that should be clean and well ventilated.

Doctor's response should be such that the patient prefer to visit BHU for their minor ailments.

## CONCLUSION

Primary health care is a key determinant of overall patient's satisfaction attending BHU. Patient's comments suggest that number of concerns must be addressed and quality of services should be improved. Prompt attending to patient's expectations, enhancing responsiveness of primary health care system and consideration of patient's perception is of utmost importance to increase patient's satisfaction outcome.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declared no conflict of interest

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NIL

**Authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.**