



CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

THE FACILITIES

The 1st Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical College (KMC) is a general hospital which is located in Kunming city, the capital of Yunnan Province. It is the largest hospital in this province. There are, in addition to the out-patient department that is the focus of this study, approximately 1,200 in-patient beds, 1,659 employees, 46 scientific departments and 18 teaching and research sections which are responsible for the clinical teaching and practice of KMC students.

The Outpatient Department has 17 clinical sections, a laboratory and x-ray facilities, an emergency room, and 4 pharmacies. Usually it treats about 3,000 outpatients per day. The Medical Department is the largest at the OPD, providing health services to about 23 per cent of the patients. During the fall semester of 1992, the health service had 14 full-time physicians from this department on its medical staff. Because of their duties in teaching, research, and administration, evenings work, and other tasks, only 12 physicians hours were made available by the Medical Department during regular clinic hours. The rotating schedule meant that not more than 12 physicians could be available at one time. Two nurses only are on duty for the order of outpatient consultation.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The rationale of this study is based on the interest of the hospital's executives in developing strategies to improve patients' waiting time and satisfaction with services. University Hospitals (UHs) in general face increasingly unstable environments. Many UHs are facing challenges such as increased competition, increased pressure to accept indigent patients, and decreased support for medical education. Given the prominent role that UHs play in the health care system, the strategies they employ for their missions of patient care, teaching, and research, along with their effects have important implications. Yet, relatively little attention has been given to the responses that UHs are making, and can make, to improve outpatients' waiting time and satisfaction with services. Invariably, over the years, the waiting time and satisfaction 'problems' have been become associated with university hospitals. As a result, the need to find solutions has, in the main, been a key priority for managers responsible for university hospitals (Leonie, 1992).

Patients' satisfaction affects their decisions regarding health care, so emphasis on patient satisfaction with services and medical care is increasing. Most medical care providers agree that consumer satisfaction is a legitimate and relevant health care concept and should be a standard component of all evaluative research (James, 1987). Patient waiting time and their relationships with medical staff are the major problems confronting administrators in multiple-hospital systems, as these two problems constitute the major part of patient satisfaction with hospital services. Patient waiting time and their relationships with medical staff are problems that have been at the top of the management agenda in UHs. Often insufficient attention is directed to patient satisfaction with waiting time, the relationships between patients and medical staff. Weak approaches similarly limit the value of many patient

surveys and inhibit their use in total quality improvement efforts.

The 1st Affiliated Hospital of KMC has been operating for years, and the Out-patient Department has provided an effective medical service to the population. The OPD, however, has grown considerably in size and complexity over the past several years. It has been recognized that it has many problems in common with other out-patient medical-care delivery system.

In this researcher's knowledge, although some hospitals in other countries have conducted similar patient facility studies, no such program in China has attempted to (1) survey outpatient waiting time, and the relationships between patients and medical staff, (2) analyze possible factors which may affect outpatient satisfaction, and (3) attempt to identify strategic issues for improving outpatient waiting time and satisfaction with services. This study include these factors.

It was the purpose of this study to investigate the problems of outpatients suffering, to analysis the strategic issues facing the hospital, and then to give some recommendations for using the major strategic issues to achieve the organization goals. However, this does not mean that the study aimed to advocate these strategic issues as an effective model to guarantee the success of the out-patient health care delivery system. It was expected that the results of this study might be useful for the development of strategies and specific programs to improve out-patient waiting time and satisfaction with services, and that the data from the study may form a useful basis for the hospital executives to the improve of health care quality.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify strategic issues for reducing patient waiting time and improving satisfaction with services at the 1st Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical College.
2. To analyze patients' experiences of, and attitudes toward the hospital services provided by the 1st Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical College.
3. To identify the factors which may affect patient satisfaction with the hospital services.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary Question: What are the strategic issues which may effectively reduce patient waiting time and improve satisfaction with service at the Out-patient Department of the First Affiliated Hospital, Kunming Medical College ?

Secondary Questions:

1. How long do the patients expect to visit the Outpatient Department, and how long do they actually wait at the Outpatient Department?
2. What are the patients' attitudes toward the relationships between themselves and the hospital staff ?
3. What are the possible factors which may affect patients satisfaction with the hospital services?

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Patient Satisfaction: Patient satisfaction has been previously linked to a number of critical variables, many of which are included in good patient survey instruments (e.g., Ware et al. 1983). That research concluded that patient satisfaction could be determined by several variables -- satisfaction with outcome, continuity of care, patient expectations, patient and employee relationships, cost efficiency, and so on.

At a more detailed level, Seamus and Michael (1991) indicated that a patient's perception of waiting time is the one of the most crucial aspect in determining overall satisfaction. If patients waited a long time, most of them felt dissatisfaction as a result. By administering patient surveys routinely, facilities can establish baseline data that allow managers to focus on specific patient service issues (Robert, 1987). Individuals are able to differentiate between several aspects or dimensions of their care (Ware, Wrigth, Snyder, et al. 1975). Based on the existing problems of the 1st Affiliated Hospital, KMC, our approach to the measurement of patient satisfaction was somewhat focused. Rather than attempt to assess all possible concerns regarding patient satisfaction with the hospital service, the following dimensions of service area satisfaction with service were selected for inclusion in this study: general satisfaction; patient waiting time; the relationships between patients and medical staff.

EXPECTED BENEFIT OF THE STUDY

The results of the research might be useful for the hospital administration to develop effective strategies and specific programs for

improving out-patient waiting time and satisfaction with services in the 1st Affiliated Hospital of KMC.

In addition, the data from the present study may form a useful basis for hospital executives to increase the efficient use of resources and to improve the quality of health care.



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย