

# CHAPTER I



## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

In 1987, Bamrasnaradura Infectious Disease Hospital (BIDH) was designated by the Ministry of Public Health as the first hospital in Thailand to provide direct care, treatment and health care promotion to patients with HIV and AIDS. The hospital has 650 beds, a health care staff of 45 physicians, 139 registered nurses, and 82 technical nurses. The total number of patients (see Figure 1.1), including HIV positive and non-HIV patients, who visited the nine outpatient departments of the Institute between 1997 and 2001, was 197,505, 203,122, 189,602, 196,272, and 211,114 persons respectively (Bamrasnaradura Institute, 2001).

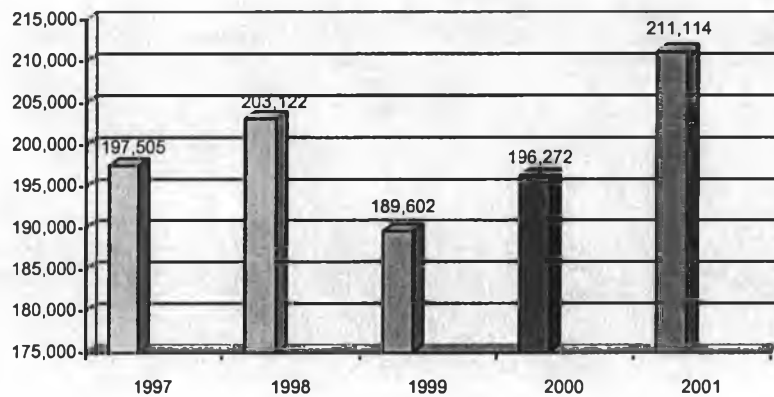


Figure 1.1 Number of patients of the outpatient department, Bamrasnaradura Institute

On October 1, 2002, Bamrasnaradura Hospital was renamed “Bamrasnaradura Institute”. Its current missions are: to control communicable diseases by doing research, to develop knowledge and technology for diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation, to provide information on communicable diseases to national and international health care staff, and to be the “Learning and Training Institute in Infectious Diseases” of Thailand (Bamrasnaradura Institute, 2002).

The Out Patient Department is the health care section of the Institute, that has facilities for screening, preventing adverse conditions by physical examination and the referral of patients to special health care departments, such as the well baby clinic, antenatal care, family planning, etc. Furthermore, it continuously provides health care information, counseling for health problems, and health care promotion for people in poor health as well as healthy people (Sawangdee, et al, 1999).

One of the aims of the Ninth National Health Development Plan was to further expand the notion of “Quality of Care” for the health care system in Thailand. Customer satisfaction is a major indicator of that quality (Policy and Strategy Bureau, 2002). Following this plan, the Institute implemented a policy to improve quality of care by using Total Quality Management (TQM) and the Hospital Accreditation (HA). Since the Institute had met the high standards for quality of service, it received the International Organization for Standardization, 9002 (ISO 9002) Certificate. The ISO 9002 is an alphabetical list for standard of quality systems in services (Khunthahut, 2001). The Medical Outpatient Department (OPD Med) followed the standards of health care services of the other departments to provide 4 dimensions: prevention, medical care, health promotion, and rehabilitation.

One of the problems of the health care services at OPD Med, Bamrasnaradura, is customer dissatisfaction. The customers voiced their dissatisfaction during the month of July 2002, with twenty-three complaints. Some complaints were: long waiting time, lack of physicians, low quality of health care services, unfriendly environment, bad attitudes of the health care staff, unwillingness to provide care, and not paying attention to the patient's needs. All of the complaints must be addressed appropriately because even if Thai people are tolerant, they could spread the word and damage the reputation of the hospital. Therefore, even if it is merely one complainer, that person might communicate the bad attitude of the health care service to their friends and family. That means a possible loss of income from the organization may occur. From the customer dissatisfaction that was mentioned above, the Institute needs to understand this problem, because even if the patients raised only one of their frustrations, the Institute should look at the quality of service before it becomes out of control. Detailed information about customer satisfaction is needed to improve service, and to understand that satisfying the customer is the first step to the success of the organization.

The reason why this study was conducted at the OPD Med, instead of the outpatient department of surgical, gynecological, or pediatrics, was because of the problems that were mentioned above. And since this department provides general health care services, more patients visit it than any other department (Figure 1.2).

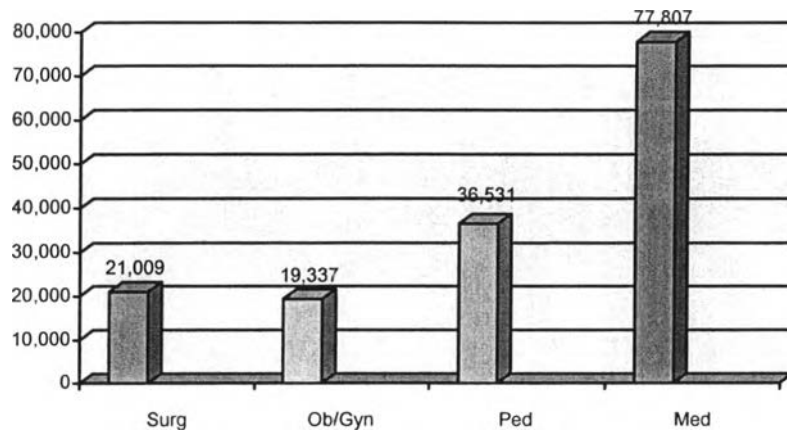


Figure 1.2 Number of patients in the 4 main services of OPD, 2001

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE MEDICAL OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENT, BAMRASNARADURA INSTITUTE**

Knowing how to satisfy the customer means the utilization of health care services to increase or maintain the organization. So, a short description of the Medical Out Patient Department (OPD Med), Bamrasnaradura Institute, will help us understand why we need to focus on improving the quality of services offered in the OPD. The OPD Med. consists of 4 main sections to provide health care services; the Registration Room, the Screening Room, the Examination Room, and the Pharmaceutical Room. The first section that the patients will be in contact with is the Registration Room.

At this section, the patient receives a queue number and then they will be registered. They are then referred to the next step, depending on their needs. The Screening Section is where they have their main health vital signs recorded, including weight, height, blood pressure and temperature. After the screening process, the nurse records the patient's symptoms, and the patients explain their health problems. Then, if the patient has specific symptoms concerning their medical health, he or she will be referred to the next section, the Examination

Room.

There are nine examination rooms, at the Institute, operating from 7:30am to 4:30pm for a total of nine hours daily. The nurse who stands by to provide care at the front counter of the Examining Room, will review the patient's history, clinical signs and symptoms in their files to identify any history or emergency health needs. The doctor usually visits the clinic at 8.00am to see walk-in patients. And then by about 9:00am they are ready to see patients who have appointments. After the physician's visit, the patient will be referred to the Pharmaceutical Room, if they require medication, and if the physician did not observe severe symptoms.

However, if patients have severe symptoms, they would be referred to a specific section to address their needs, such as x-ray or the laboratory or they might be referred to counseling for health education or pre-test counseling for HIV or anti-retroviral drugs use or a number of other reasons. With the various concerning sections reporting, the final diagnosis would then be summarized for the patient and prescribed medication given or they might be referred to additional testing, as needed.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Data gathered from this survey was reviewed and analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of quality of care and customer satisfaction at the OPD Med, Bamrasnaradura Institute?
2. Is there any connection between the perception of quality of care and customer satisfaction at the OPD Med, Bamrasnaradura Institute?

## **OBJECTIVES**

**General Objective:** To assess customer satisfaction at the Medical Outpatient Department, Bamrasnaradura Institute.

**Specific Objective:** To measure the level of quality of services and customer satisfaction at OPD Med, Bamrasnaradura Institute, and to find if there is an association between customer perception and their satisfaction level in respect to the quality of care at OPD Med, Bamrasnaradura Institute.

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

Quality of service in the customer's perception is associated with customer satisfaction.

## **VARIABLES**

**Independent Variables:** Socio-demographic variables include: age, sex, educational level, income, number of OPD's visits, perceptions of the customer in the quality of the health care service and the quality of the health care staff.

**Dependent Variables:** Customer satisfaction towards health care services as related to convenience, courtesy, coordination, and medical information.

## **TERMINOLOGICAL AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

Throughout this paper, the following terminology and operational definitions are used for specific variables. The first definitions are for the terminology that is used in general and the second ones are operational definitions for independent and dependent variables.

## **1. Terminological Definitions**

- 1.1 OPD refers to the Outpatient Department at Bamrasnaradura Institute.
- 1.2 OPD Med. refers to the Outpatient Departments that provides the 4 types of health problems for kidney, gastro intestinal, skin, and tuberculosis.
- 1.3 Customer refers to male and female patients or their relatives who assist them while visiting the OPD Med. They must be aged 15 and above.
- 1.4 Signs describe the characteristics of the illness that can be observed by others.
- 1.5 Symptoms means subjective interpretations of experiences and may not be directly observed.
- 1.6 Clinic milieu means the social environment in the clinic.

## **2. Operational Definitions**

These operational definitions specify how to measure a variable in the field of customer perception in quality of care and their satisfaction

### **2.1 Perception of the customer about quality of health care services**

This refers to the customer's opinions towards the health care staff and services as related to three aspects; clinical environment, such as adequate, safe, and clean resources; health care providers' competence and personal interest, such as knowledgeable staff, courtesy, willingness to provide service, and taking time to listen to and answer questions.

The outlook was measured by using the ordinal scale questionnaire.

## 2.2 Customer Satisfaction

This refers to the degree of positive feelings towards the quality of health care services to meet the customer's expectations: convenience; courtesy; coordination of services and medical information received. The customer's satisfaction was measured by using the ordinal scale questionnaire.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK IN THIS STUDY

The variables studied, independent and dependent variables were included in Figure 1.3.

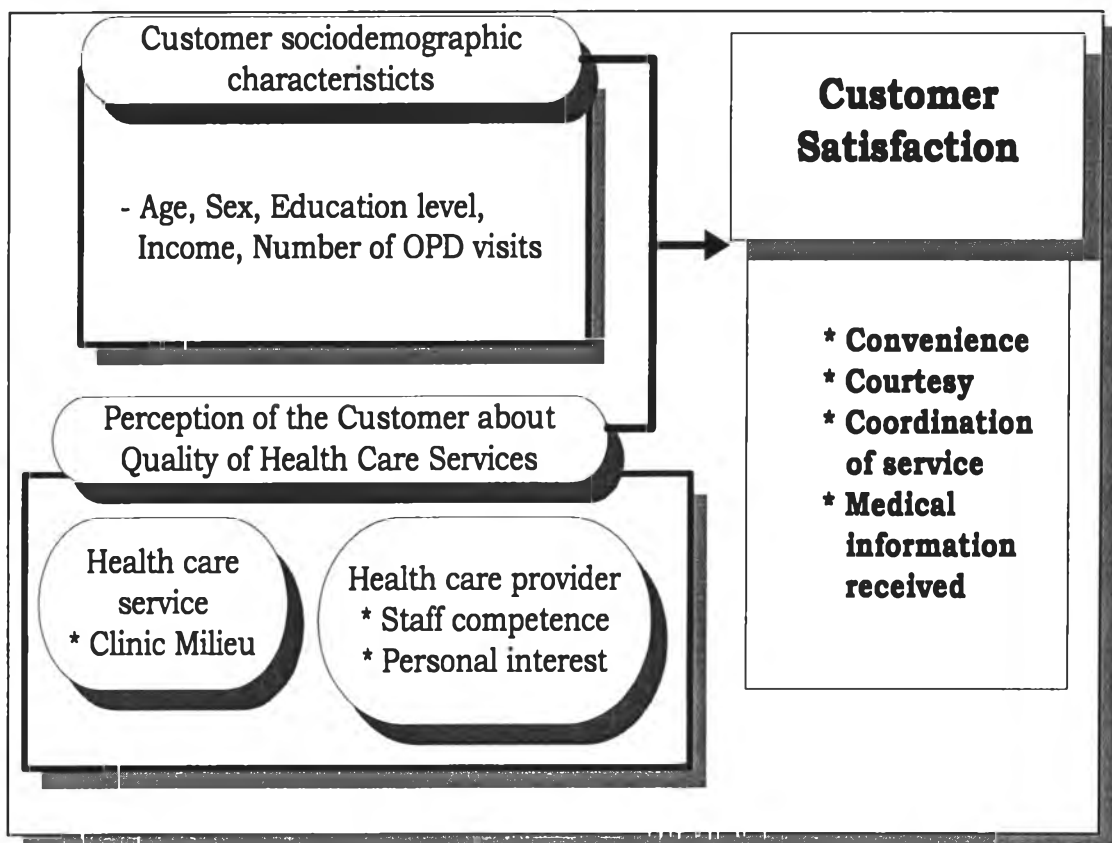


Figure 1.3 Conceptual Framework