

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

IMPROVEMENT OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES IN MONGGAR REGIONAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL MONGGAR, BHUTAN

Bhutan is divided into 20 districts. However, due to geographic boundaries and socio-cultural distinctions, the districts are grouped into Eastern Region, Central Region, and Western Region, thus necessitating the establishment of referral hospitals in each region.

The district hospital in Monggar District is the referral hospital in the Eastern Region, and is referred to as Monggar Regional Referral Hospital (MRRH). It has been upgraded to regional referral status in 1995. Construction of a new hospital complex with 100 bed capacity has already commenced since January 1997.

MRRH has a present bed strength of 58. The hospital has two main sections: Outpatient Department (OPD) with administrative unit and Inpatient Department (IPD) which includes operation rooms. Laboratory and physiotherapy units are also in IPD, but they do not fall under direct administrative authority of matron who is in-charge of IPD. As of December 1996, the hospital has a total staff strength of 58.

MRRH provides basic referral services in medicine, general surgery, gyne & obstetrics, ophthalmology and dental, to the people of 5 neighboring districts in the region. Of recent months, the hospital administration has been finding difficult times to cope with the emergency medical care services both within the district and from outside the district. This has happened mainly due to two reasons: (1) the limitation of present hospital infrastructure does not allow the provision of optimum referral services to the referred cases from the 5 districts in the region, and (2) the case load from within the district has increased due to commencement of major project activities in the district.

The way the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in MRRH is provided currently, has lot of deficiencies in the system. The present system does not prepare the hospital administration for rapid response during emergency situations.

This study, which is an action research study, explores possibilities for bringing about improvement in EMS system in MRRH with the goal to reduce death and disability through providing prompt and proper emergency medical care to the critically ill patients and trauma patients. The Health Division is specially keen in establishing trauma care centers at strategically located hospitals along the National Highway. MRRH is one of the hospitals identified by the Health Division for developing a trauma care center in the eastern region. Therefore, it is in keeping with the Government mandate that an EMS system be developed in MRRH, which will

incorporate the requirements of trauma care provisions as laid down by the Health Division.

The study is presented in 6 different parts: (1) Essay, (2) Proposal, (3) Data Exercise, (4) EMS Training Program, (5) Presentation, and (6) Bibliography. Essay gives a brief background of development of health delivery system in Bhutan, and explains the concept of emergency medical care and EMS system. The current system of providing emergency medical care in MRRH is described, and deficiencies and problems in the system are identified. The essay provides justifications in regard to current problems and expected problems, for the need to improve EMS in MRRH.

The proposal looks at how corrective measures should be planned through innovative strategies to improve EMS system in MRRH. The purpose of the proposal is to develop an EMS system at MRRH whereby improved EMS can be provided to the people in the eastern region. It gathers information on problem perceptions about EMS from the perspectives of various stakeholders in Monggar, and analyzes the ideas, thus gathered, to come up with alternative solutions for affecting improvements. The stakeholders include health staff of MRRH, District authorities, Police officers, community leaders and village health workers. The data, to be obtained from in-depth interviews, focus group discussion using Nominal Group Technique, and conventional focus group, will be used to base decisions for planning and implementation of EMS programs

Data exercise is actually an exercise to pilot test the research techniques to be used in collecting data for the proposed study. The data exercise was conducted in MRRH so as to provide relevant feedback to the proposal.

EMS training program is an attempt to equip the health staff of MRRH with the knowledge, attitude, and skills in the management of emergency medical care. The curriculum for this training program covers only basic life support in emergency cardiac and trauma care. It is a first step towards instituting a formal EMS training program in MRRH.

In the presentation part, the main points of the topics discussed in the study are enumerated for presentations to the thesis committee. The presentations are made with the help of overhead transparency projections.

The last part is the annotated bibliography. It gives the list of the reference materials used and referred to in the study.