

PRIMARY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE COUNTY OF VÂLCEA – PATIENTS’ SATISFACTION

CRISTIANA BĂRĂGĂNESCU

Ph.D. Candidate, The “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu

Abstract: *The research of the patients’ satisfaction regarding the primary medical assistance is difficult to accomplish perfectly because subjectivity is hard to be assessed. By applying a set of questions with anonymous answer, we tried to find out the patients’ opinions about the family doctors in the county of Vâlcea, nowadays.*

Keywords: *patients, family doctors, primary medical assistance.*

Rezumat: *Cercetarea satisfacției pacienților față de asistența medicală primară este un lucru dificil de realizat perfect deoarece subiectivitatea este greu cuantificabilă. Am încercat prin aplicarea unor chestionare cu răspuns anonim să aflăm părerea pacienților despre medicii lor de familie la ora actuală în județul Vâlcea.*

Cuvinte cheie: *pacienți, medici de familie, asistența medicală primară*

Cuvinte cheie: *pacienți, medici de familie, asistența medicală primară*

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The scores assessment reveals strictly the patients’ subjective satisfaction as there is no established level to relate to. The research of the patients’ satisfaction regarding the primary medical assistance involves measuring their perception as a subjective dimension without having the possibility to work with certain, established data, but being able to make a correlation between new and old (conceptual speaking) and the necessity of the family doctor to meet the patients’ needs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of research which was used referred to the sociological survey and the questionnaire represented the technique for data gathering. The procedure for applying the questionnaire was made through the operators (physicians and medical assistants). The questionnaires were left in the waiting room of the family doctors’ medical offices in order to be freely filled in – the answers were anonymous. The questions reflected indicators of the type: issues related to the quality of the medical assistance, to the access to the primary health care and to the equipment of the medical offices.

The questionnaire contained 13 closed questions with simple choice answers, as well as opinion questions.

1. **Age**
a) 10-25 years old b) 25-45 years old c) 45-65 years old
d) over 65 years old
2. **Gender**
a) masculine b) feminine
3. **How pleased are you about your family doctor? We ask you to give a mark from 1 (unpleased) to 10 (very pleased)**
a) 1-4 b) 5-8 c) 9-10.
4. **What distance should you travel in order to get to the family doctor’s medical office?**
a) small (a 5-10 minute- walk) b) large
5. **How often do you go to your family doctor’s?**
a) very rarely b) rarely c) often (monthly)
d) very often (more than twice a month)
6. **What are the reasons for your going to the doctor’s?**
a) acute affections b) chronic diseases (compensation prescription) c) issuing medical certificates d) annual final examination e) other (mention)
7. **The time for entering the family doctor’s consultation room is:**
a) satisfactory b) intermediary c) unsatisfactory
8. **The comfort in the waiting room is:**
a) satisfactory b) intermediary c) unsatisfactory
9. **Have you ever made an appointment with your family doctor?**
a) yes b) no
(if the answer to the question no. 9 is yes:
10. **Did the appointment help you?**
a) yes b) no
11. **Did you happen not to stick to your appointment?**
a) yes b) no
12. **Do you think all medical offices should make appointments?**
a) yes b) no
13. **Are you satisfied by the equipment of your family doctor’s medical office?**
a) yes b) no

The questionnaires assessed different aspects of satisfaction based on the theory that satisfaction was based on the internal organisation manner of the

afferent medical unit, of the accessibility to the competent health care system, of the efficient organization between the waiting time and the viability of the medical system.

SAMPLING

The study used a sample of 250 patients coming from the urban and rural environment of the county of Vâlcea. The patients were registered on nine family doctors' lists between January and April 2007. Urban municipalities: Rm. Vâlcea, Băile Govora. Rural municipalities: Galicea, Mihăești, Păușești-Otasau, Bărbătești, Orlești.

Out of those 250 patients, 20 did not fill in the questionnaire because they did not have their reading glasses, or it was difficult for them to write or they simply did not want to fill in the questionnaires. The patients came from different social categories and environments.

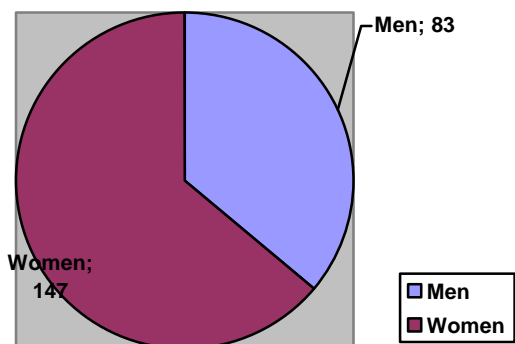
DATA ANALYSIS

The data gathered from those 230 questionnaires were encoded and introduced under a table form which could allow their analysis and interpretation.

Regarding age, out of those 230, 24 (10.43 %) were between 10 and 25 years old, 77 (33.47 %) between 25 and 45 years old, 85 (36.95 %) were between 45 and 65 years old and above the age of 65 years old, there were 44 patients (19.13 %).

Out of those 230 of patients, 83 (36.08 %) were men and 147 (63.91 %) were women.

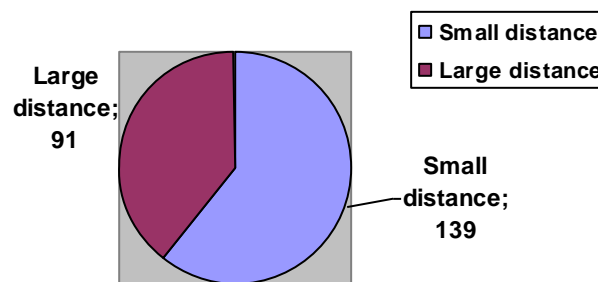
Fig.1. Gender distribution of the questioned patients



The third question was quite subjective. No doctor received a mark from 1 to 4, 8 patients (3.47%) gave a mark between 5 to 8, 216 patients (93.91%) gave 9 and 10 and 6 patients (2.6%) did not give any mark.

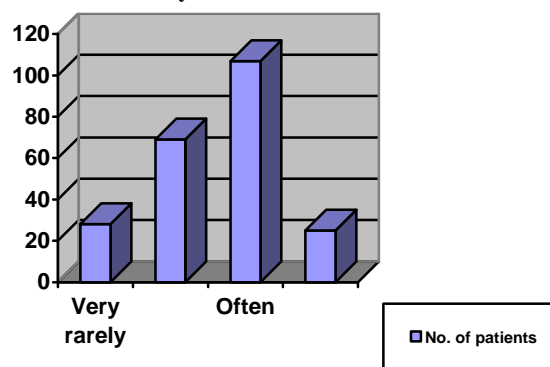
From the point of view of the accessibility to the family doctor's medical office, 139 patients (63.43%) considered that they had a small distance to walk up to the medical office (5-10 minute-walk) and the rest of them – 91 patients (39.56%) lived away from their family doctor's medical office.

Fig. 2. Distribution taking into account the distance up to the medical office.



Regarding the frequency of the visits made to the family doctor's office, 28 patients (12.17 %) declare that they go there very rarely, 69 (30 %) declare that they go rarely, 107 (46.52 %) go often (monthly), and 25 patients (10.86 %) go to their family doctor's very often (more than twice a month).

Fig.3. Distribution taking into account the frequency of visits to the family doctor's medical office.



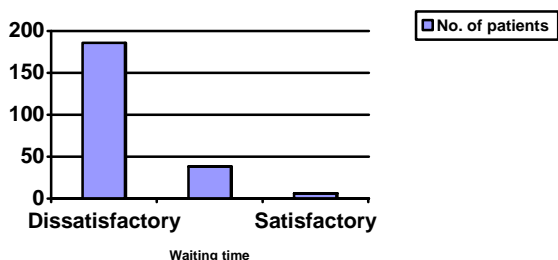
From the point of view of their affections, 131 patients (56.95 %) go for acute affections, 118 (51.3 %) for chronic diseases (compensation prescription), 116 (50.43 %) for issuing medical certificates, 141 (61.3 %) for the annual final examination, and 22 (9.56 %) for different information, psychological advice or for accompanying other patients. There are patients who go to the doctor's for one or more of the above-mentioned items.

The time spent in the waiting room until their entry into the medical office is considered satisfactory by 153 patients (66.52%), 57 patients (24.78 %) consider it is intermediary and 30 patients (13.04 %) consider it is dissatisfactory.

The comfort in the waiting room (temperature, reading newspapers, folders with medical information, cleaning, proper chairs, television) was assessed by the patients as follows:

- 186 patients (80.86 %) said it is satisfactory,
 - 38 patients (16.52 %) considered it was intermediary,
 - 6 patients (2.6 %) considered it was dissatisfactory.
- In the EU countries is very common to make an appointment.

Fig.4. Patients' distribution according to the waiting time.



Regarding the question „Have you ever made an appointment with your family doctor?” 61 patients (26.52 %) answered positively and the rest of 169 (75.47 %) have never made an appointment, because in Romania people used to go to their doctors' when they need or want to. Out of those who made an appointment, 61 patients considered that it helped them (26.52 %) and for 27 of these ones (11.73 %) there were times when they could not stick to their appointments. It results that in order to create such a discipline among the people of Romania, there is more to be done taking into account the civic and sanitary education, and this is only because out of those 230 patients, only 118 (51.3%) considered that all medical offices should practice appointments and 112 patients (48.69%) said that this was not necessary.

Fig.5. Patients' distribution according to the appointment option.

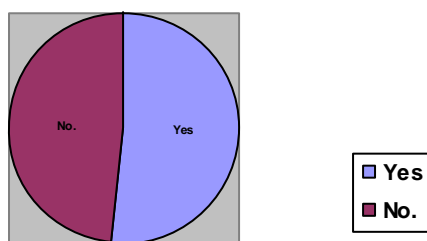
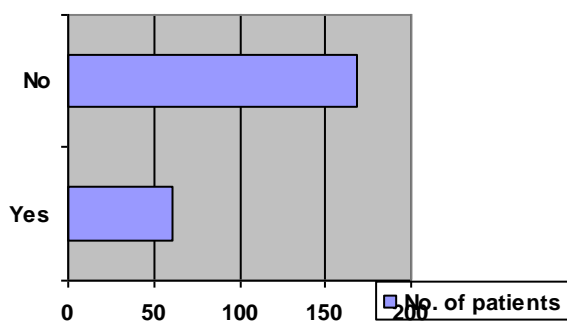


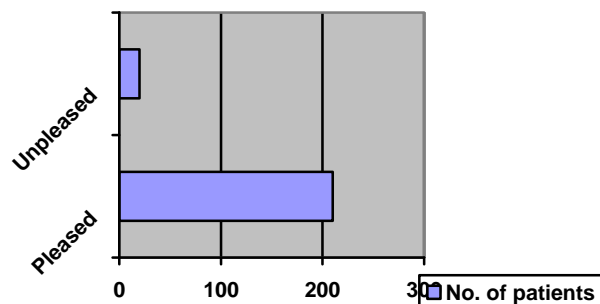
Fig.6. Appointed patients' distribution and of those unscheduled for the family doctor.



Regarding the equipment of the family doctor's medical offices, 210 patients (91.3 %) are pleased and only 20 (8.69 %) are displeased. We think this is credible due to the fact that the respondents were adults in general and lived before 1989, when the equipment of the ancient

offices left much to be desired and the changes made in the medical offices today are visible, taking into account the fact that one of the patients' satisfaction level depends on how the medical offices look like.

Fig.7. The satisfaction level of the patients' regarding the equipment of the family doctor's medical office.



CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account the heterogeneity of the patients who answered the questionnaire (life environment, education level, training level, age) correlated with the personality of their family doctors – the questionnaires being anonymous, we consider that this analysis is well grounded.

The satisfaction regarding the primary medical assistance may be included in the general category of the health state of the population (this may be regarded as a relative concept taking into account the still existing discrepancies between Romania and other more or less developed countries).