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## Article

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# Patient Satisfaction Perceived in the Emergency Department: A Quantitative Study in a State Hospital in Romania

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**Abstract** The paper analyzes the level of satisfaction of the students as patients, who called for urgent medical services during the month of April 2017, aged between 18-30 years. Quantitative marketing analysis was used in the study. Data and information provided by respondents were processed on the basis of a questionnaire comprised of 10 questions. The study shows that 35.3% of the respondents rated the level of cleanliness unsatisfactory and 35.9% of the patients said that the kindness and availability of the medical staff of the emergency department were unsatisfactory. However, 34.4% of the visitors said they would return to the same state hospital if needed, while 51.5% said they did not know if they would go to the same state hospital.

**Key words** Quality of medical service, emergency department, patient satisfaction, patient needs, patient perception of medical staff

**JEL Codes:** D12, M31

## 1. Introduction

The Department of Emergency within a State Hospital includes: doctors, nurses, medical registrars, nurses, and nurses. The Emergency Department is open to all patients requesting emergency medical assistance following accidents, acute new accusations or chronic illnesses, whether patients have arrived by ambulance or by their own means.

In the Emergency Department, after triage, patients are examined by the surgeons who will decide the necessary investigations and specialties to be performed, and then provide specialist advice to determine the treatment (Brazdau and Constantinescu, 2011).

In 1998, the first Emergency Department (ED) was established within the Bucharest Emergency Clinical Hospital. The main goals set for ED were: triage, stabilization and emergency treatment, diagnosis of patients considered medical-surgical urgency. In the following years, this service was similarly developed in all state hospitals operating in all cities in Romania (Berkowitz, 2016).

As in all over the world, in Romania, the role of urgent reception service is to allow a rigorous selection and prioritization of patients suffering from serious injuries caused by traffic accidents, labor or victims of physical aggression, face of those who arrive at the hospital due to minor problems.

The evolution of the pre-hospital emergency system in Romania was possible and favorable as a result of the permanent training of the young generation of physicians by the specialized medical staff from the Department of Emergency and prestigious University Centers in the country.

In 2004, the UPU-SMURD Department was established, which fulfills objectives similar to those of the UPU service, with the addition of pre-hospital emergency medical assistance through collaboration and medical coordination with the Mobile Reanimation and Delivery Service, with staff (physicians and Nurses) necessary for the functioning of medical resources, with the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (ISU) - the terrestrial component and the General Aviation Inspectorate - the aeromedical component (Prolifeclinics, 2014).

Beginning with 2013, the new UPU-SMURD Department will be upgraded. In this new stage of the UPU were taken the specialized guard rooms together with doctors of other specialties. Following this change, the number of cases presented, investigated and treated by emergency doctors from the Department of Emergency Prizes increased from an average of 150 cases in 24 hours to over 500 cases in 24 hours.

In 2017 the main functions of the UPU-SMURD Department are the following: provision of pre-hospital and hospital emergency care; providing medical dissection through the single emergency national 112 system, providing healthcare to incidents with multiple victims/calamities and using the residential training center.

Given the importance of the quality of the services offered by the specialized doctors through the Department of Emergency, it was decided to carry out a quantitative research among Bucharest students aged between 18-30 years.

## 2. Literature review

Currently, many healthcare professionals with different specializations provide patients of any age, nationality and gender through the Emergency Department, complex emergency health care services following the occurrence of accidents or chronic illness.

Starting with 2007, some of the private hospitals operating in different cities in the country and in the capital have begun stepping up to provide emergency medical services for several specializations: surgery, orthopedics etc.

Over the years, many researches have been carried out at national and international level regarding the level of satisfaction experienced by the patients during the provision of medical services within the emergency receiving department from the most recent ones: Ware (1988), Williams (1994), Stizia (1997), Henderson (2004), Brazdau and Constantinescu (2011), Francu (2012), Devkaran (2013), Olaru (2016), Berkowitz (2016) etc.

### 3. Methodology of research

To illustrate the practical aspects of the level of satisfaction experienced as a student student at the Department of Emergency Prizes, a quantitative research was carried out on a sample of 100 students in the first year of study in the bachelor program. Students volunteered to participate in this quantitative research in April 2017.

Sample construction was based on a random method and included people between the ages of 18 and 30 in Bucharest, the researcher randomly selected 65 people from a sample of 100 people who responded in written format to the 10 questions included in the questionnaire (see figure 1).

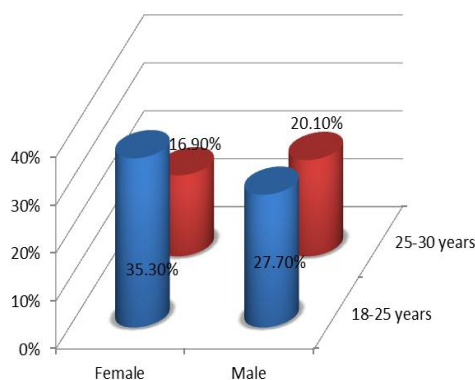


Figure 1. Distribution of sample population by age and sex

Source: Made by authors

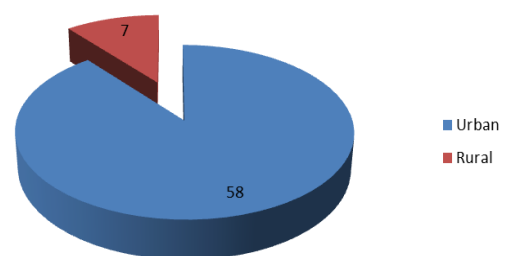


Figure 2. Distribution of population in the sample by environmental origin

Source: Made by authors

Of the total number of people surveyed, 52% were female and 48% male, aged 18-30, 58 urban and only 7 rural (see figure 2). Although unrepresentative, the sample may be considered relevant as selected students have visited at least once in the life of a state hospital as patients, becoming minor or major patients in the Department of Emergency.

The major goal of the research was to identify perceptions and assess the level of satisfaction experienced by students-patients following the visit to the Emergency Department, taking into account multiple aspects such as: salon cleaning, courtesy and availability of medical staff and the level of information in relation to the afflictions suffered.

The objectives of the study are to provide a coherent overview of student satisfaction - patients facilitating answers to questions such as:

- At the emergency medical service, the southern patients were accompanied by: the health personnel, the members (family members, friends, neighbors) or went alone?
- In the necessary explorations on other sections according to the diagnosis received, the patients were accompanied by: the medical staff, the members or they went alone?
- Have the patients received at the emergency service from the attending physician all the necessary information regarding the diagnosis, therapeutic indications and subsequent complications that may occur as a result of the illness suffered?
- As patients, at the moment of receiving the emergency service, did they receive information about the medical services offered in the state hospital and how to access them?
- Have they been satisfied with other types of intra-hospital (psychological, social, nutritional, etc.) services?
- How did the quality of the accommodation codes (emergency room) have been assessed in terms of the cleaning factor?
- How did they appreciate the kindness and availability of emergency medical staff?
- Medicines on prescription prescribed for urgent receipt (for the condition they suffered):
- Have they been administered by the medical doctor for a specified period or were bought by the family?
- In case of need of emergency medical assistance will they return to the same state hospital?

- What was the general impression after the visit to the emergency reception service?

The analysis and processing of the data obtained within the research was done with the help of Excel and the specific scientific instrument.

#### 4. Results and discussions

The quantitative research was conducted on a sample of 65 students in first-year undergraduate program. The group was selected based on the high level of use of medical services within the Emergency Department that operates at the state hospitals in Bucharest, as well as on the knowledge and experience accumulated as patients of the state hospitals in Romania. Of the total respondents who needed healthcare at the Emergency Department, 64.62% of the people were accompanied by the family members, friends, and neighbors. At the opposite end, there were unaccompanied people, their percentages reaching 16.92% (see figure 3).

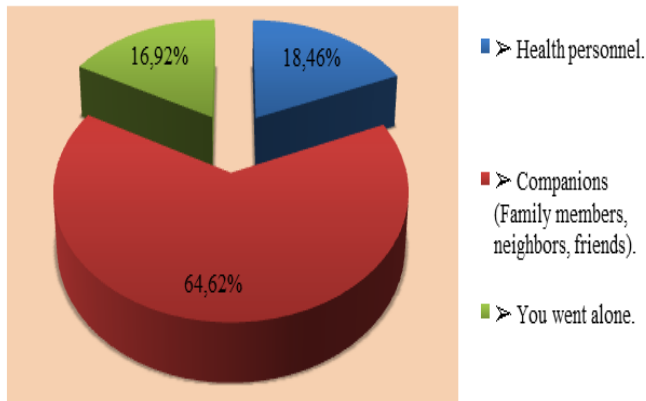


Figure 3. Share of students-patients accompanying/unaccompanied to Emergency Medical Department

Source: Made by authors

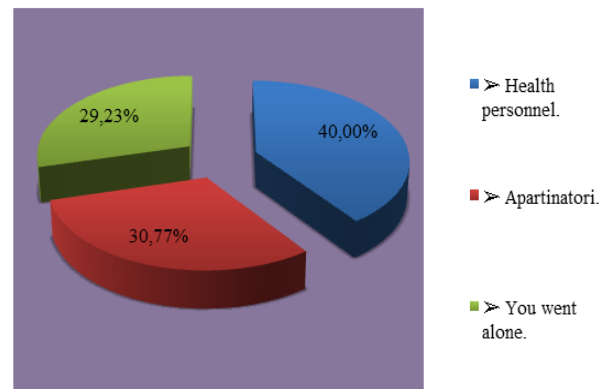


Figure 4. Share of students-patients accompanying/unaccompanied to exploration on other sections in order to establish the diagnosis

Source: Made by authors

At the other medical departments, the students were accompanied by 40.00% by the medical staff, 30.77% by the patients, while only 29.23% of them presented themselves unaccompanied (see figure 4).

Approximately 83.08% of the interviewed persons who used the emergency medical service as patients were informed by the doctor about the established diagnosis, therapeutic indications and subsequent complications that may arise due to the illness suffered. However, 16.92% of the sample members claimed that they did not receive detailed information about their own diagnosis, being directed to other specialist controls (see figure 5).

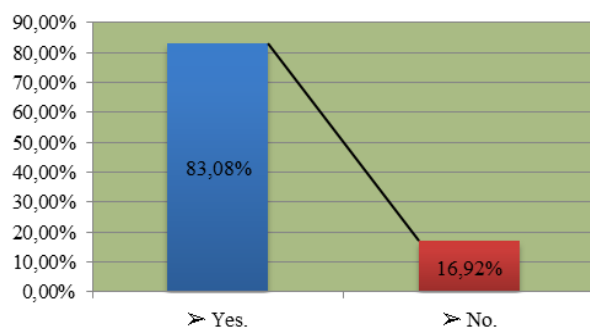


Figure 5. The degree of information of the doctor regarding the diagnosis of the students – patients

Source: Made by authors

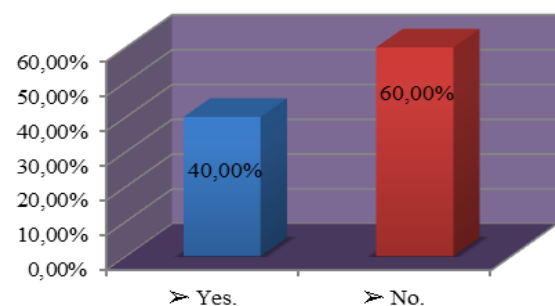


Figure 6. Information degree of students – patients related to the medical services offered in the state hospital and the modality of access to them

Source: Made by authors

As patients at the time of their arrival at the emergency department, 40.00% of them received information regarding the medical services offered in the state hospital and the way of access to them, the remaining 60.00% claim that they have not received any information about them (see figure 6).

Almost 7.69% of respondents said that they did not ask for information about other in-hospital medical services (nutritional, psychological or social) within the state hospital. In contrast, 92.31% of the respondents were informed about these types of medical services, but only 10.77% of the respondents benefited from them whereas 81.54% of the respondents said that "it was not the case" (see figure 7).

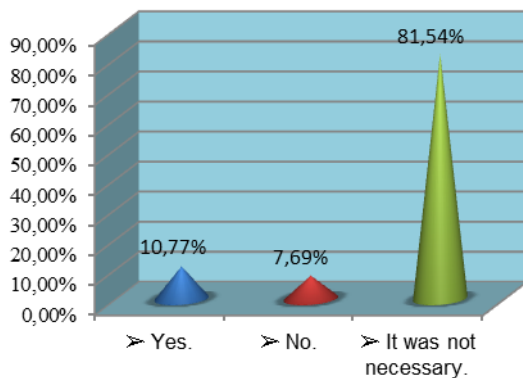


Figure 7. Level of use of intra-hospital medical services

Source: Made by authors

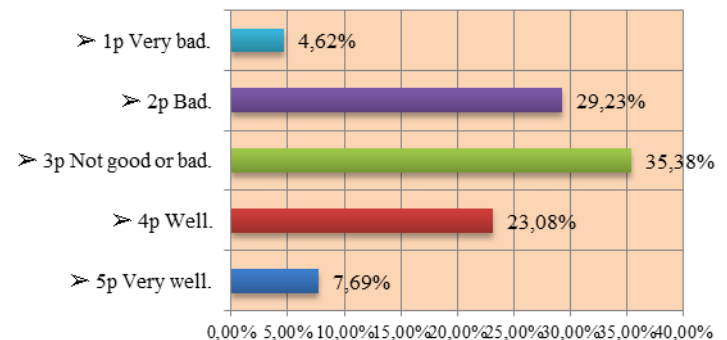


Figure 8. The cleaning degree in the salons of the Department of Emergency

Source: Made by authors

Considering the degree of cleanliness in the salons of the Department of Emergency, over 35,38% of the patients rated "not good, not bad", 23,08% responded "well" while only 7,69 % held "very well". There is a proportion of patients who have been dissatisfied with the cleanliness of salons, 29,23% of them have rated "bad" and 4.62% have declared "very bad" (see figure 8).

Regarding the kindness and availability offered by the medical staff in the Emergency Department, over 35.94% of the respondents said they were "not good or bad", 32.81% indicated the "well" response and 7.81% affirmed "very well". Some of the students said they had repeatedly struck the unavailability of medical staff from state hospitals in Bucharest, acquiring some disbelief in Romanian medical services. Thus, 20.31% of them said "bad" about the level of friendliness and availability of medical staff and 4.62% answered "very bad" (see figure 9).

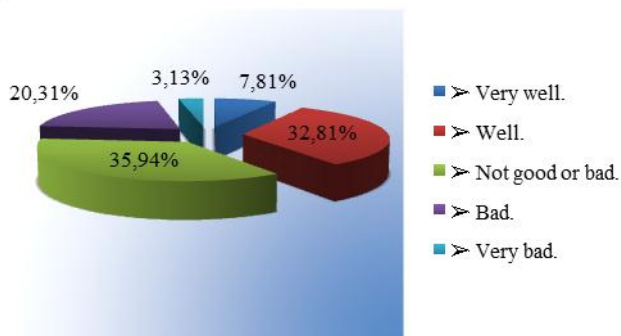


Figure 9. The courtesy and availability of medical staff from the Emergency Department

Source: Made by authors

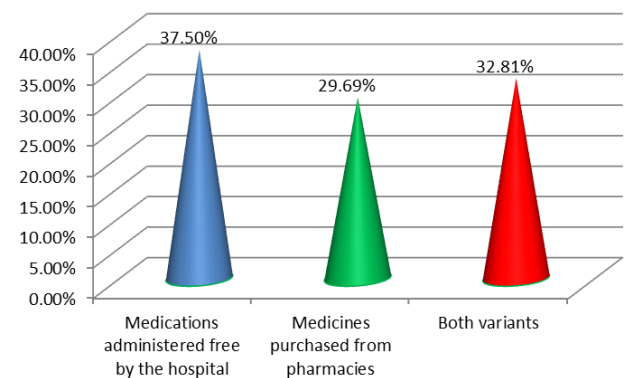


Figure 10. Purchasing medicines prescribed by doctor's diagnosis

Source: Made by authors

After diagnosis by doctors, almost 37.50% of patients received free medical treatment at the state hospital and some 29.69% of patients had to purchase the medicines from any pharmacy near the hospital.

Inappropriate handling of drug stores in state hospitals or lack of funds for their purchase has generated multiple unpleasant situations, over 32% of patients in the Emergency Department have had to bear some of the cost of drugs, while the medicines administered in emergency rooms must be provided free of charge (see figure 10).

Asking if they will use again in case of need the emergency medical services in a state hospital, 51.56% of the respondents declared "I do not know", 14,06% of patients answered "no" and 34,38% said "yes"(see figure 11).

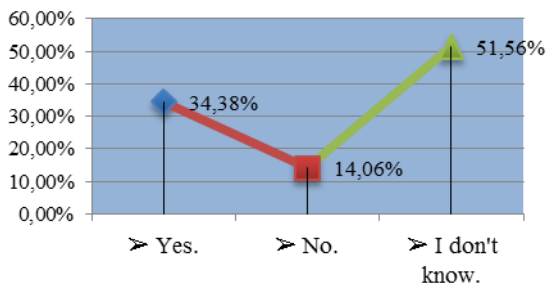


Figure 11. The measure in which they will again use the emergency medical services in the state hospital

Source: Made by authors

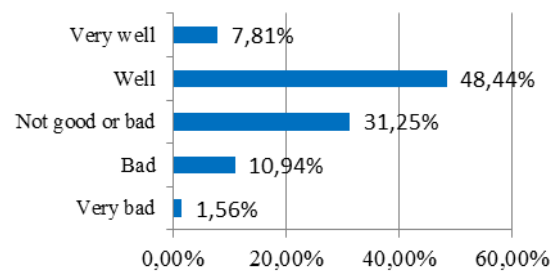


Figure 12. The general impression felt after the visit to the emergency service

Source: Made by authors

The overall impression felt by most patients after the visit to the emergency department is positive. Over 87% of patients say they are satisfied, while the percentage of those unhappy reaches 12% (see figure 12).

## 5. Conclusions

The quantitative research among the students in Bucharest was aimed at identifying perceptions and assessing the level of satisfaction experienced by them following the visit to the Emergency Department at a state hospital as patients.

The study was conducted on a small sample of 65 students from the first year of the undergraduate program, participating students aged 18-30.

The results of the research reveal that over 64% of the persons presenting to the Emergency Department were accompanied by the members (family members, friends or neighbors) and 16.92% of them came alone.

In order to establish a diagnosis, it was necessary to move the patient to other specialized medical units. In this case, the share of patients accompanied by medical personnel was 40.00%, unaccompanied by 29.23% and those accompanied by the members by 30.77%.

Considering the efficiency of communicating medical staff with patients, 83.08% of respondents stated that they had been informed by the doctor about the established diagnosis, received adequate therapeutic indications and were warned about the subsequent complications that may occur as a result of illness or accident suffered. However, more than 16% of respondents said they did not receive enough information about their own diagnosis and were directed to other specialized departments to carry out more in-depth investigations.

Patient information on medical services offered at the state hospital remains low. More than 60% of patients said they were not well informed, while 40% of respondents said they had received information about the medical services provided at the state hospital and how to access them.

Regarding the provision of other types of intra-hospital services - psychological, social, nutritional, etc., over 10% of respondents have benefited from these services and 81% of patients said they did not need these medical services.

The assessment of the existing cleaning level in the Emergency Department salons, only 7% of the patients was satisfied. Almost 33.85% of respondents said they were totally dissatisfied with the cleanliness of the salons, and 35.38% rated the cleanliness as "not good, not bad".

The results of the study show that over 40% of patients were satisfied with the kindness and availability of the emergency department staff, while the proportion of dissatisfied patients was almost 25%.

Over 62% of patients arriving at the Emergency Department were forced to purchase some or all of the medications prescribed by a doctor from the nearest state hospital pharmacy. After establishing the diagnosis by doctors, only 37.50% of the patients received free medical treatment provided at the state hospital.

Of the patients surveyed, only 34% said they would return to the state hospital for emergency medical care, while over 51% said "I do not know" and 14% said they would visit other hospitals if needed.

The study shows that over 87% of patients were generally satisfied with the medical services provided by state hospitals. The results of the research contribute to substantiating future strategies for improving the quality of emergency medical services and the level of communication between patients and healthcare staff in state hospitals.

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