

# Patients' Satisfaction with Medical Services in the Qassim Area

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The important goals of hospitals are to deliver high quality health services and to respond to the needs of the patients. Patient satisfaction is one of the most sensitive indicators of the quality of their services as it measures the gap between what is expected and ideal from one side and what actually exists in reality.

**Objective:** To determine the level of the patient's satisfaction with the medical services and the delivery of those services. **Methodology:** Overall, 500 patients were selected from five different superspeciality hospitals of the Qassim region and they were analyzed by using a predesigned, prestructured and a self explained questionnaire during September 2009 to February 2010. The results were analyzed by using the SPSS software.

**Results:** A majority of the patients (50%) were satisfied with the skills of the doctors in the form of the provision of medical services

and almost most of them agreed with the good infrastructure of the medical clinics. 41% of the total patients felt that the medical services which were provided at the hospitals were quick and 46% found that the overall standard of the medical services was good. 42% of the patients were satisfied with the medical services in general, while 14% were strongly satisfied. 27% of the patients felt that the doctors ignored them at some point of time and 36% believed that the doctors did not provide enough time to the patients.

**Conclusion:** In general, the provision of the medical services at various hospitals are satisfactory, but still, improvement in the form of the provision of laboratory services in time and providing enough time to the patients by solving their queries and at the same time, maintaining a satisfactory rapport between the physician and the patient is needed.

**Key Words:** Satisfaction, Medical service, Hospital

## INTRODUCTION

Studies on the patients' attitudes towards health services, health personnel and resources constitute important elements in the extent to which the health services have met the consumers' expectations and needs and hence, they can be viewed as a means of judging the degree of their satisfaction with the services [1,2].

The degree of patient satisfaction can be used as a means of assessing the quality of health care and the personnel. It reflects the ability of the provider to meet the patients' needs. Satisfied patients are more likely than the unsatisfied ones to continue using the health care services, maintaining their relationships with specific health care providers and complying with the care regimens [3]. Satisfaction studies have been done mostly in the developed countries. In the developing countries, such studies are scarce and are of a general nature. In the Gulf Region, some studies on satisfaction with ambulatory care were conducted in countries like Saudi Arabia [4,5].

The current study will start the process of evaluation with the hope of delineating areas of strength and weaknesses in the services of the hospitals in the Qassim region to pave the way for appropriate planning strategies for improvement. This article is intended to stimulate further research in this area.

## METHODOLOGY

The study population consisted of patients who were admitted in five major hospitals of the Qassim region, which consisted of the King Fahad Specialty Hospital, the Central Hospital of Buraydah,

the Maternity and Child Hospital of Buraydah, the Malik Saud hospital of Unaiza and the Bukariyah Hospital. All the patients who visited these hospitals during the study period (September 2009-February 2010) were included for the research. A majority of the patients were included from the King Fahad Specialty hospital, the Central hospital of Buraydah and the Maternity and Child Hospital of Buraydah. The data were collected by using a predesigned, prestructured and a self explained questionnaire after taking written, verbal and oral consent for the research after conducting a pilot study. The questionnaire included 30 questions which covered all aspects of the socio-demographic characteristics of the patients who visited the hospital, the physician's skills, the infrastructure quality and the types of facilities which were provided at the hospital. The results of the data were analyzed by using the SPSS software.

## RESULTS

The data were obtained from 500 patients with a 100 percent response rate (180 patients from the King Fahad Speciality Hospital, 140 patients from the Central Hospital of Buraydah, 80 patients from the Maternity and Child Hospital of Buraydah, 70 patients from the Malik Saud hospital of Unaiza and 30 patients from the Bukariyah Hospital). The sample consisted of 371 males (74.2%, mean age = 38 years, range 26-74) and 129 females (25.8%, mean age = 31, range = 22-56) and a majority of both were Saudi nationals (83.4%). The two groups did not differ significantly in age ( $P= 0.19$ ). A majority of the patients were married (58.6%) and were between the age group of 18-34 years (48.8%).

In the case of education of the patients, 6.6% reported that they did not have formal education, 7.4% were primary school graduates, 39.4% were intermediate and high school graduates, and 45% were university graduates and beyond. Out of all the respondents, 11.8% were housewives and 16.2% were students.

By looking at the response which was received from the patients regarding the skills of the physicians who were working at the respective hospitals, it was found that a majority of the patients (50%) agreed that the physicians could clearly explain the reason for the laboratory investigations, while 16% of the patients had doubts regarding their capacity to explain the reason for the same. At the same time, 17% of the patients thought that the physicians couldn't provide the satisfactory diagnosis. A majority of the patients (45%) believed that the physicians could provide a satisfactory diagnosis. Regarding the adequate care with respect to the diagnosis and treatment at the respective hospitals, it was found that 17% of the patients were satisfied with it, while 48% patients were not satisfied. A majority of the patients (40%) said that the physicians were working seriously and impartially for the patients, while 18%

of the patients did not agree with them. Surprisingly, 27% of the patients believed that sometimes the doctors ignored the patients and some of them (19%) even had doubts about the capability of the physician in the form of treatment. 36% of the patients felt that doctors were not providing enough time to the patients to satisfy their queries. With regards to the laboratory services, 51% of the patients said that they received good care at the laboratory and 41% of the total patients said that the doctors provided enough time explaining the results to the patients, while 25% of them did not believe so. Almost 50% of the patients were strongly satisfied with the laboratory results and 51% thought that the service providers could interpret the laboratory results to the patients better. Most of the patients agreed (54%) or strongly agreed (29%) that confidentiality was highly maintained with respect to the laboratory results. Commenting on the infrastructure of the hospitals in general, the patients (43%) believed that medical clinics were capable of providing good care and that the medical services which were provided were of a good standard (46%), while 19% and 13% patients did not agree with that simultaneously. 58% of

Sl. No.	Question	Strongly Agree No. (%)	Agree No. (%)	Neutral No. (%)	Not Agree No. (%)	Strongly Disagree No. (%)
<b>Physician's Skill</b>						
1	Physician (Doctor) can clearly explain the reason for laboratory investigations	112 (22)	251 (50)	57 (11)	75 (16)	5 (1)
2.	Doctors could provide the satisfactory diagnosis	76 (15)	227 (45)	107 (21)	80 (17)	10 (2)
3.	Adequate care provided for the diagnosis and treatment	66 (13)	238 (48)	102 (20)	86 (17)	8 (2)
4.	Doctors are working seriously and impartially towards patients	75 (15)	198 (40)	129 (26)	92 (18)	6 (1)
5.	Doctors do not ignore patients	31 (6)	182 (37)	121 (24)	136 (27)	30 (6)
6.	Doctors capacity is doubtless	59 (12)	224 (45)	109 (22)	97 (19)	11 (2)
7.	Doctors provide enough time to patients	41 (8)	148 (31)	112 (22)	181 (36)	18 (3)
8.	Service providers provides good care at the laboratory reception	115 (23)	252 (51)	97 (19)	27 (5)	9 (2)
9.	Services providers provide enough time for explanation in laboratory	60 (12)	205 (41)	98 (20)	126 (25)	11 (2)
10.	Strongly satisfied with laboratory results	116 (23)	252 (50)	86 (17)	44 (9)	2 (1)
11.	Service providers can better interpret the laboratory results to the patients	103 (21)	258 (51)	90 (18)	38 (8)	11 (2)
12.	Confidentially is highly maintained for laboratory results	145 (29)	268 (54)	69 (14)	14 (2)	4 (1)
<b>Infrastructure</b>						
13.	Medical Clinic is capable of providing good medical care	53 (11)	214 (43)	125 (25)	96 (19)	12 (2)
14.	Waiting area is neat and clean	84 (17)	285 (58)	77 (15)	36 (7)	18 (3)
15.	Laboratory services are satisfactory	108 (22)	265 (53)	88 (18)	32 (6)	7 (1)
16.	Laboratory provides all diagnostic tests	92 (18)	195 (39)	107 (21)	84 (17)	22 (4)
17.	Complete safety measures against infections are followed in laboratory	119 (23)	256 (52)	102 (21)	16 (3)	7 (1)
18.	Adequate protection measures are taken while dealing with the patients	84 (17)	246 (49)	136 (27)	31 (6)	3 (1)
<b>Hospital Services</b>						
19.	Appointment is convenient	36 (7)	158 (32)	144 (29)	117 (23)	45 (9)
20	Waiting period is short to get the emergency services	79 (16)	254 (51)	74 (15)	87 (17)	6 (1)
21.	Except emergency services other medical services are quick	35 (7)	204 (41)	121 (24)	130 (26)	10 (2)
22.	To get the appointment is not difficult	67 (13)	206 (42)	105 (21)	109 (22)	13 (2)
23.	Medical services are available whenever patients need it	40 (8)	209 (42)	112 (22)	126 (26)	13 (2)
24.	Comfortable waiting space available in the laboratory	82 (17)	266 (53)	67 (13)	79 (16)	6 (1)
25.	Less time wasting in laboratory for sample collection	78 (16)	202 (40)	63 (13)	135 (27)	22 (4)
26.	Can communicate with service providers in the laboratory via phone	35 (7)	239 (49)	172 (34)	40 (8)	14 (2)
27.	Hours of laboratory work is sufficient for patients	78 (16)	246 (49)	83 (17)	74 (15)	19 (3)
28.	Less time waiting to receive laboratory results	80 (16)	196 (39)	103 (21)	116 (23)	5 (1)
29.	Medical services are of good standard	64 (13)	229 (46)	138 (27)	67 (13)	2 (1)
30.	Medical services are satisfactory in general	70 (14)	208 (42)	125 (25)	91 (18)	6 (1)

**[Table/Fig-1]:** Patients satisfaction with the medical services provided at various hospitals in Qassim region

the patients were satisfied with the cleanliness of the waiting area. 39 % of the patients replied that the laboratories at the hospitals were capable of providing all the diagnostic tests, 52% said that the complete safety measures against infections were very well followed and that the protection measures were adequately (49%) taken while dealing with patients inside the laboratory. Regarding the hospital services in general, 32% of the patients agreed said that they got a convenient appointment and 17% said that they didn't get it. A majority of the patients (51%) believed that the waiting period was short, particularly in getting emergency services from the hospital. Except the emergency services, the rest of the medical services were reported to be provided quickly by 41% of the patients, while 26% did not agree with it. 22% of the patients said that they found it difficult to get the appointment in time. 42% of the patients said that they got the medical services whenever they needed it, while 26% of the patients did not agree with them it. 53% of the patients felt that the waiting space which was available in the laboratory was comfortable and 40% of the patients found that the laboratory samples were collected within a short time, while 27% felt that their time was wasted during the sample collection. 49% of the patients agreed that they could easily communicate with the service providers via phone for their queries and 39 % of the patients said that they received the laboratory results within a short time. Most of the patients (42%) found the medical services to be satisfactory in general and 53% of the total patients said that they got satisfactory laboratory services [Table\Fig-1].

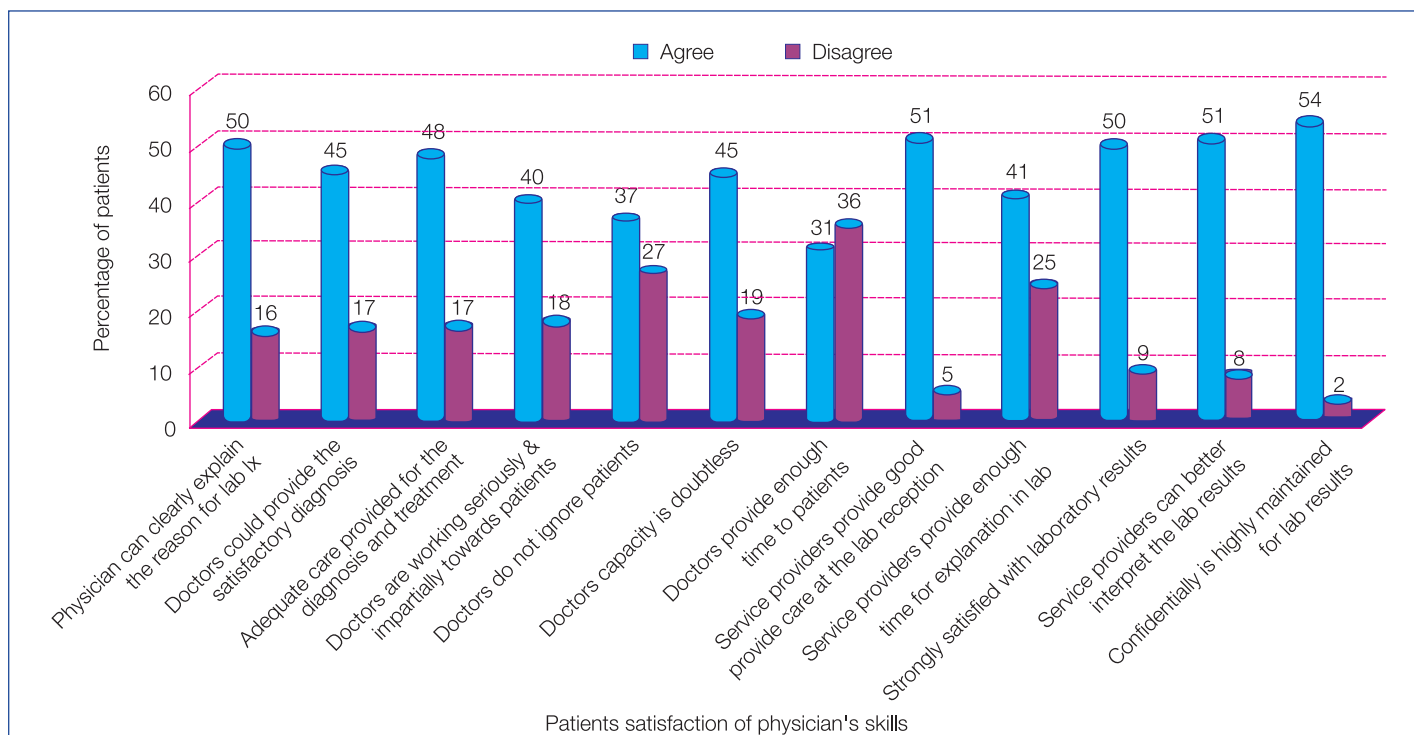
### DISCUSSION

This study has demonstrated the degree of satisfaction of the patients in five different hospitals, which covered the patients in the Qassim area. All of them were of Saudi Arabian nationality and no significant differences were found from the responses of the individual patients from these five hospitals concerning the physician's skill, infrastructure and the hospital services.

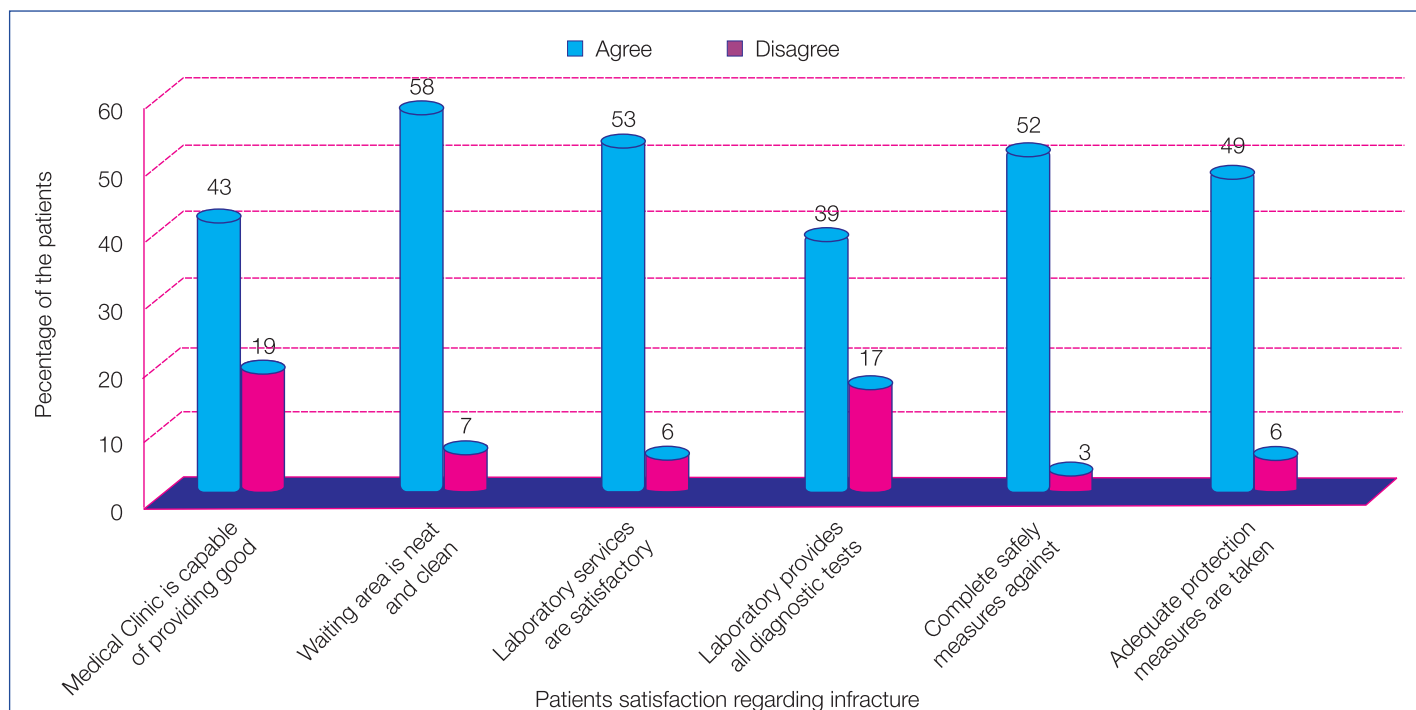
The socio-demographic data in this study showed that no significant difference was found between the socio-demographic

characteristics and the level of satisfaction of the patients. Similar results were reported by Al-Deghaither with regards to the rehabilitation services which were delivered at the King Khalid University Hospital in 2002 [5].

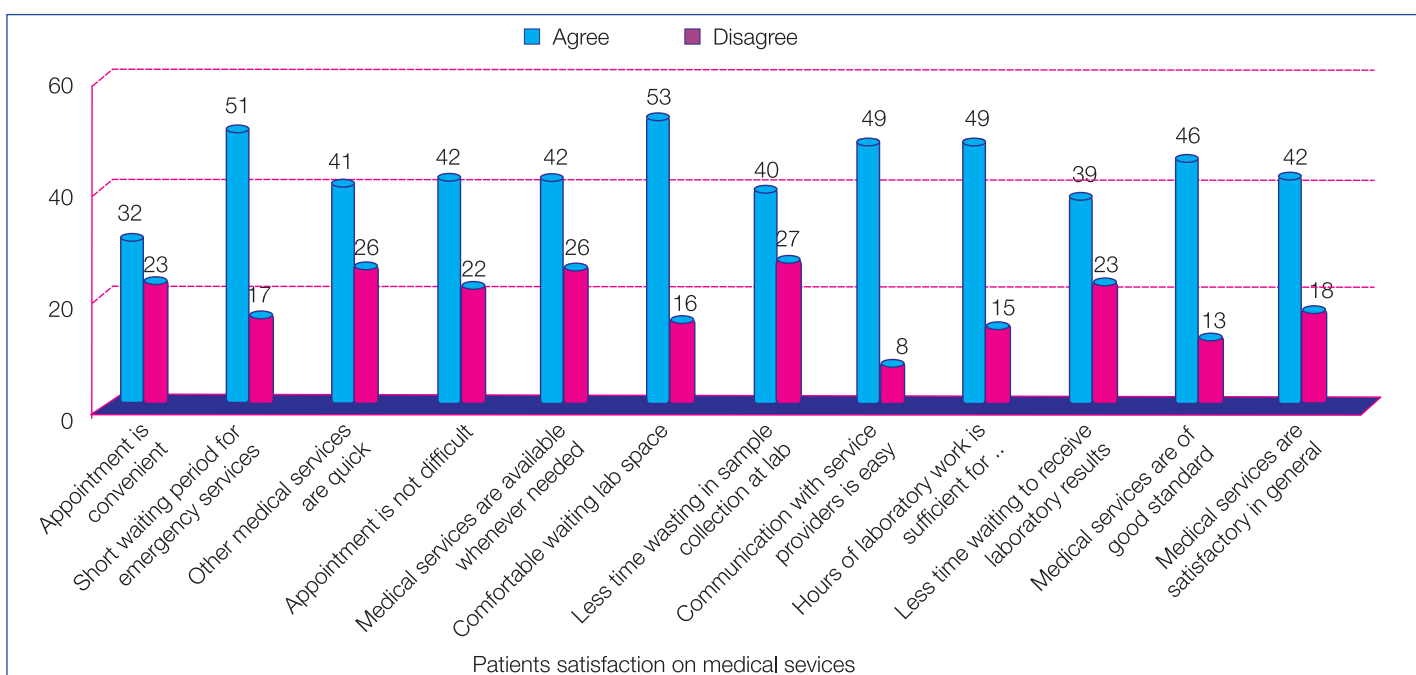
This study is an effort to evaluate the patient satisfaction ratings concerning the interpersonal skills of the physicians and technical competence were seemed to be agreeing for over all scores was 45.66% [Table/Fig-2]. These satisfaction scores are comparable to those of similar studies which were conducted in Kuwait city for the physician services, which scored 44.2% (Al-Doghaither et al. 2001) and other studies which were conducted in Riyadh and Jeddah cities Saudi Arabia [6,7], but are much lower than the reported findings from global studies, which ranged from 61 to 97% [8,9,10,11]. Other studies have shown that the physicians' communication skills and the length of the time that they spend talking, explaining and responding to their patients' queries, and offering reassurance and support, involving the patients in decision-making, and discussing test results and findings from physical examinations were strong and important correlates of the patients' satisfaction [12,13]. The infrastructure (available facilities, communication and waiting area and adequate protection measures) in this study overall scored 49% [Table/Fig-3]. This was similar to that of a study which was conducted in Riyadh for patient satisfaction by using the rehabilitation services which were delivered at the King Khalid University Hospital [5]. However, in other studies which were done by Sodani et.al. in 2010 concerning patient satisfaction with respect to the infrastructures and the basic amenities which were available in the hospitals, the patient respondents were found to be more satisfied with respect to the availability of the basic amenities in the studied public health facilities for which the score rates were 54% to 71% [14]. The medical services in general scored 42% [Table/Fig-4]. This score was much lesser than that which was found in the study which was done by Singh et.al in 1999, in which over 70% of the respondents were satisfied with the services which were provided, the doctors' willingness to listen to explanations of the patients' problems and with their courtesy and consideration [15,16].



[Table/Fig-2]: Patients satisfaction regarding physicians' skills working at hospitals



[Table/Fig-3]: Patients satisfaction regarding infrastructure



[Table/Fig-3]: Patients satisfaction regarding the medical services

### LIMITATIONS

The data collection (questionnaire and interviews) was carried out by the members of the internship students and the questionnaire did not include all the parameters which affected their satisfaction.

### CONCLUSION

In general, the provision of the medical services at various hospitals are satisfactory but still, improvement in the form of the provision of laboratory services in time and providing enough time to the patients for solving their queries and at the same time, maintaining a satisfactory rapport between the physicians and the patients is needed.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like thank to Dr. Mohsin Shaikh for his help.

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**DECLARATION ON COMPETING INTERESTS:**

No competing Interests.

Date of Submission: **Jun 04, 2011**

Date of Peer Review: **Jun 09, 2011**

Date of Acceptance: **Jun 12, 2011**

Online First: **Jul 10, 2011**

Date of Publishing: **Aug 08, 2011**