

**PATIENTS' RESPONSE TO WAITING TIME
IN AN OUT-PATIENT PHARMACY DEPARTMENT
HOSPITAL UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA (HUSM) IN YEAR 2008**



**DIPLOMA OF PHARMACY IN THE
FACULTY OF PHARMACY,
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
PULAU PINANG**

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Abstract

Background: Customers desire short waiting times whereas service providers want to maximize resources utilization. Patient waiting time has been defined as the length of time from when the patient entered the pharmacy to the time the patient actually received his or her prescription and left the pharmacy. Patients are attended to in various units within the hospital system but almost invariably a high percentage of out-patient patrons visit the hospital pharmacy unit for their drug needs. Mowen et al (1993) reported that satisfaction levels were higher when consumers were told how long they would have to wait. Harin (Haran et al 1993) suggests that the factors which affect the customer satisfaction in healthcare are Doctor, Drugs, Diagnosis, Distance, Affordability, Prompt service, etc. Therefore, there is a need to carry out a systematic study on patient waiting time in a pharmacy, with a view to identifying the factors that affect waiting time and recommend ways of minimizing the delay.

Objective: This study was done to identify the dispensing procedure at OPD HUSM, investigate the possible operational problems that may lead to excessive patient waiting times as prescriptions are filled and to examine patient disposition to perceived delays at the OPD HUSM.

Methodology: Data was collected through self-administered questionnaire. Participation in the study was totally voluntary. Subjects were informed about the study objectives and procedures and that data collected will be used only for the stated research purposes. The sample size for this survey were patients reported to the OPD of the University Science of Malaysia Hospital. The study was carried out from Aug11th 2008 to Nov11th 2008 with a sample size were 50 patients. The questionnaire included 20 items related to satisfaction with pharmaceutical services. Those items were divided into four dimensions. Nine items were related to demographic, five related to opinion for waiting time in outpatient pharmacy only, one related to accommodation found around outpatient pharmacy, fourth related to opinion toward staff serves and lastly related to their suggestion and comment for serves improvement. The questionnaire was then pilot tested and few changes were made in the sequence and wording of some questions before finally administering. A sample of 3 pharmacists and 6 assistant pharmacists was also selected to collected pharmacists' reasons for prescription delay.

A retrospective study was used to get the monthly of increment and decrement patient waiting at OPD in year 2008. The data collected by using Q-Management System (QMS) in outpatient pharmacy department.

Results: The workflow analysis revealed considerable delay in the dispensing procedure as a result of extended process components. The highest waiting time for a dispensing process averaged 50.36 min, and 70% of this was due to delay components in March 2008. Specifically, the major delay components included patient queues for billing prescription sheets, subsequent payment to the cashier, incomplete prescription, item must be recorded etc. danger drug, freshly syrup prepared and quantity/ quality of staff. Generally, patients were not satisfied with undue delay caused by the dispensing procedure at the pharmacy.

Conclusion: Most of the patient waiting time in the outpatient pharmacy studied can be accounted for by delay components of the dispensing procedure. Attempts should therefore be made to reduce the time on these components of the dispensing process so that more time could be devoted to counseling while reducing the total time spent by the patient in having their prescriptions sheets filled.

Key words: Dispensing process; hospital pharmacy; pharmaceutical service; waiting time; outpatient pharmacy.