



### INVESTIGATING SATISFACTION STATUS OF THE PATIENTS APPLYING TO ERCIYES UNIVERSITY HEALTH APPLICATION AND RESEARCH CENTER TO GET HEALTH TOURISM SERVICE

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Received: 09-06-2018

Accepted: 27-12-2018

#### Abstract

In this study it is aimed to investigate satisfaction status of the patients applying Erciyes University Health Administration and Research Center (HARC) to get health tourism service in terms of the infrastructure of the institution, employee relations and service quality. This descriptive study was conducted on 27 patients applying Erciyes University HARC between the years of 2016 – 2017. The English health tourism questionnaire prepared in the light of literature by the researchers has been conducted to the patients who accepted to participate the research as data collection tool. The questionnaire includes 15 questions about the polyclinic/clinic applied, where the patients came from, the gender, age, education level, income level, the reason of arriving the country, the reasons of preferring this hospital and the satisfaction from the institution and staff, and an open-ended question asking for expectations and suggestions. Questionnaires of the pediatric patients were answered by their relatives. Frequency and percentage distributions were calculated in the analysis of the data. In our study, it has been found that there is general satisfaction in terms of the infrastructure of the institution, personnel relations and service quality. 85.2% satisfaction has been detected even in the areas that were relatively less than the satisfaction level "Education Quality of the Assistant Health Personnel" "The Hospital's Side Services (accommodation, transportation, interpreter ... etc.)," Shortness of the service period that the patient took from hospital".

**Keywords:** *Health Tourism, Hospital, Satisfaction, Service Quality, Management*

## Introduction

Travelling to another country to use health service is defined as health tourism, and the person who travels for this purpose is called as health tourist. Health tourism is divided into three branches as Medical Tourism, Thermal Tourism, Senior and Disabled Tourism (Ministry of Health, 2012, p.64).

Today, the first thing that comes to mind as health tourism is thermal tourism, and in recent years health tourism mobility has also contained abroad journeys organized to get hospital services. This change has led to economic power received from health tourism to increase and health tourism to become attractive (Aydm, 2012, p.92).

Health tourism patients demand service for the reasons such as the rarity or absence of high-tech health care services and professional human resources in their country, the wish of having a holiday together with the treatment, expensive health care services in their country, the will of having much more qualified health care, not wanting the operation to be known due to any reason in their own country (plastic surgery, infertility treatment, etc.), tourism mobility in cases of limited opportunities for holiday in their country in terms of climate and geographical conditions (travelling to the countries having forests, highlands and historical and cultural richness), usually the demand of having a holiday in a country having many opportunities of thermal facilities and thermal tourism, the requests of chronic patients, seniors and disabled individuals to travel to be treated in a different environment, the requests of individuals having drug addiction or different addictions to be in a different or more convenient environment and the desire of individuals to hold on to the life and to live (Ministry of Health, 2012, p.65).

For medical health tourists to make the right choice in terms of medical treatment, the questions such as who will perform the medical treatment or the operation, what qualities, certificates and experiences the facility has, which accreditation body has approved the medical services of the facility, what the success level of the hospital preferred for the treatment to be performed is, what the level of the care before, during and after the treatment, the accommodation level and administration level are, what will happen in case of defective or unsuccessful treatment and how much the necessary materials for the treatment, food, etc. will cost besides the operation or medical treatment fee (Akdu, 2009:59).

In this study it is aimed to investigate the satisfaction status of the patients applying Erciyes University Health Administration and Research Center (HARC) to use health tourism service in terms of the infrastructure of the institution, employee relations and service quality.

## 1. Material And Method

This descriptive study was conducted on 27 patients. The patients are selected from volunteers and relatives (relatives of the pediatric patients) applying Erciyes University Health Administration and Research Center between the years of 2016–2017. The English health tourism questionnaire prepared has been conducted to 27 the patients who accepted to participate in the research as data collection tool. The questionnaire included 15 questions about the polyclinic/clinic, where the patients were admitted, the gender, age, education level, income level, the reason of arriving the country, the reasons of preferring this hospital and the satisfaction from the institution and staff, and one open-ended question asking for expectations and suggestions. Questionnaires of the pediatric patients were answered by their relatives. Frequency and percentage distributions were calculated in the analysis of the data.

## 2. Findings And Discussion

27 patients from Bahrain (the country which has a contract with Erciyes University) came to Erciyes University HARC between the years of 2016 and 2017. Turkey is located in Middle East and Central Asian Turkish Republics. It has a comfortable position and infrastructure to provide service in especially medical tourism, and it is also a convenient distance to be travelled from those countries (Health Foundation of Turkey and Health Association, 2010: 20).

**Table 1 The Distribution of the Research Group According to the Descriptive Characteristics**

Variables	Group	Number	%
The country of the patient	Bahrain	27	100
Gender	Female	12	44,4
	Male	15	55,6
Age	25 and ↓	8	29,6
	26-30	4	14,8
	31-35	4	14,8
	41 and ↑	11	40,7
Education Level	Illiterate	3	11,1
	Primary Education	6	22,2
	High school	8	29,6
	Associate Degree	2	7,4
	Bachelor's Degree	8	29,6
Income Level	0-1500 TL	10	37,0
	1501-3000 TL	9	33,3
	3001-4500 TL	3	11,1
	4501 TL and ↑	5	18,5
Reason for coming to the country	Visiting relatives	2	7,4
	Health	20	74,1

	Other	5	18,5
Reason for preferring this hospital	Agency's advice	12	44,4
	Insurance company	2	7,4
	Other	13	48,1

55.6% of the patients were male, 40.7% were 41 years and older, 29.6% were high school graduate, 29.6% had bachelor's degree and 37.0% had an income between the ranges of 0- 1500 TL.

74.1% of the patients travelled to Turkey to receive health care service, 7.4% to visit their relatives and 18.5% for some other reasons. With the travel agencies' becoming a part of the activity, tour organizations have started to provide patients travelling more easily (İçöz O, 2009, p: 2266). Medical intermediary foundations and travel agencies exist in many countries worldwide. Medical intermediary foundations and travel agencies offer all-inclusive tours including transportation before and after the medical treatment, accommodation, insurance services, getting visa, ticket reservations, hotel reservations and holiday and fun (Bristow, Yang, Lu, 2011:109).

**Table 2 The distribution of the research group in terms of the satisfaction status**

Satisfaction status	Disagree		Undecided		Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. I am satisfied with the international quality standards of the hospital	-	-	2	7.4	25	92.6
2. I am satisfied with the physicians of the hospital.	-	-	-	-	<b>27</b>	<b>100.0</b>
3. I am satisfied with the short duration of the service I received from the hospital.	2	7.4	2	7.4	23	85.2
4. I am satisfied with the technological infrastructure of the hospital.	-	-	3	11.1	24	88.9
5. I am satisfied with the side services (accommodation, transportation, translator, etc.) of the hospital.	4	14.8	-	-	23	85.2
6. I am satisfied with the hygiene of the hospital.	-	-	1	3.7	26	96.3
7. I am satisfied with the education quality of the doctors.	-	-	1	3.7	26	96.3
8. I am satisfied with the education quality of the auxiliary health staff.	-	-	4	14.8	23	85.2
9. I am satisfied with the low cost of the treatment.	-	-	3	11.1	24	88.9

10. I am satisfied with that the country is safe.	-	-	1	3.7	26	96.3
11. I am satisfied with getting informed about my health status.	1	3.7	-	-	26	96.3
12. I am satisfied with the approach of the assistant staff.	1	3.7	-	-	26	96.3
13. I am satisfied with the communication with the doctors.	-	-	3	11.1	24	88.9
14. I am satisfied with the communication with the assistant medical staff.	1	3.7	1	3.7	25	92.6
15. I am satisfied with the hospital's effort to solve problems.	1	3.7	1	3.7	25	92.6

The satisfaction status of the patients receiving health care service within the scope of health tourism at Erciyes University Health Administration and Research Center is presented in Table 2. All the patients participated in our study gave the answer that “I am satisfied with the physicians of the hospital.” It is one of the advantages of the medical tourism in Turkey that education and experience levels of the physicians and service providers are at the level of western standards (İçöz O, 2009, p:2273).

96.3% of the patients stated that they were satisfied with “the hygiene of the hospital”, “the education quality of the physicians,” “that the country is safe,” “getting informed about their health status” and “the approach of the assistant staff.” The interaction between patients and health care staff is the most important factor affecting patient satisfaction and service quality. The kindness, compassion, interest and understanding towards patients, the ways of the staff's presenting their knowledge and skills enable the patients to relax and adopt to the treatment more (Özer A. 2007:142).

The education levels and experiences of the physicians affect service quality in medical tourism. In the study titled “A Fieldwork on the Service Quality and Satisfaction in Turkey Medical Tourism Sector,” the participants stated that they found the education and experiences of the physicians adequate (Kılınç İ. 2017:138). Patient Safety, Infection Control Measures, Hand Hygiene, Stress Management, Medical Waste, Patient Privacy, Staff – Patient Communication and foreign language training were provided for the staff giving service to the patients who applied Erciyes University HARC to receive medical tourism service as part of in-service training.

92,6% of the participants stated that they were satisfied with the “International Quality Standards of the Hospital,” “Communication with Medical Staff” and “The Effort of the

Hospital to Solve Problems.” The hospital’s having JCI and ISO quality certificates may be one of the factors that increase satisfaction. Erciyes University HARC continues to increase its competitive capacity by receiving international quality and standard certificates such as JCI (13.03.2017-12.03.2021) and ISO (21.12.2015-14.09.2018). Erciyes University HARC is one of the three state hospitals receiving “Health Tourism License.”

The lowest rate of satisfaction (85.2%) was “The Short Duration of the Service Received from the Hospital,” “The Side Services of the Hospital (accommodation, transportation, translator, etc.)” and “The Education Quality of the Assistant Health Care Staff.”

Patients and relatives participating in the survey were analyzed according to the clinics they were hospitalized. It was seen that high cost procedures such as bone marrow transplant, stem cell transplantation, course of chemotherapy for oncologic patients, bypass, liver transplant and kidney transplant were performed. The reason of that the rate of satisfaction is high even in the area that it is the lowest may be due to the fact that the costs are lower than the European countries. In a study conducted on the factors considered by medical tourists when making selection, costs were found as one of the most important factors (Bristow, Yang, Lu, 2011:111).

### 3. Conclusion

In our study, it was established that a general satisfaction had occurred in terms of the infrastructure of the institution, staff relationships and service quality. Even in the fields of “The Education Quality Level of the Assistant Health Care Staff, “The Side Services of the Hospital (accommodation, transportation, translator, etc.)” and “The Short Duration of the Service Received from the Hospital” in which the satisfaction was relatively low the satisfaction rate was determined as 85.2%.

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