



Complaints Lodged by Emergency Department Patients in a Teaching Hospital

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Introduction

- It is often assumed that Emergency Departments (EDs) have a high rate of complaints from patients.
- Possible reasons are:
 - ◆ Overcrowding
 - ◆ Long waiting times
 - ◆ Poor communication and short consultation times.

Method

- Design: Retrospective case review of complaints received by the ED at the Prince of Wales Hospital in 2009.
- Definition: Complaints is defined as from emergency patients or their representatives requiring replies
- Data: Demographics of patients and their complaint issues were analysed.

Results

- There were 63 complaints
- The annual attendance was 150011.
- The complaint rate was 1 per 2400 attendances
- 65% of complaints were lodged by patient of-kin
- 65% of complaints arose during the departmental response to the swine flu epidemic.
- Most complaints arose during the evening.
- Nature of complaints
 - ◆ Treatment and Diagnosis: 56%
 - ◆ Communication: 22%
 - ◆ i.e. staff manners
 - ◆ Access issues: 17%
 - ◆ i.e. long waiting time and/or access block
- Treatment and Diagnosis Subgroup analysis
 - ◆ 83% of complaints are substantiated.
 - ◆ 38% of substantiated cases were medical or orthopaedic patients
 - ◆ 24% of substantiated cases were for those specialties without admission right
- Of the 86% substantiated complaints, 75% could be remedied by further explanation and apology

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Tables. Complaint categories

Communication	Access	Treatment
Personal interaction	Adequacy of service	Adequacy of care
Communication breakdown	Delays	Diagnosis and outcomes
Information provision	Discharge / transfer procedures	Competence & negligence
consultation	Waiting lists	Medication errors

Rights	Administration	Environment	Cost
Property	Policy	Amenities	Billing
Discrimination	Standards	Comfort	Level of services
Privacy & records	Documentation	Parking	insurance
Confidentiality	Response to request	food	



Discussion

- This is a pilot review on a limited number of complaint cases lodged in 2009.
- Communication is an important aspect to improve patient satisfaction
- Important diagnostic challenges should be emphasized repeatedly among staff
- For better analysis, a larger scale prospective study would be recommended.

