
Assessing the quality of services at UNRWA Health Care Centers at Hebron and Bethlehem Areas from patients and professionals point of views

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the level of the quality of health services provided by the UNRWA health care centers at Hebron and Bethlehem areas from both perspectives of health service providers and beneficiaries of those services. The quality of health services at these centers was assessed by measuring the five dimensions of service's quality (tangibility, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance). The study also explored the priorities of patients, staff, and administration in improving the quality of health services. It also addressed the factors that reduce the quality of services at UNRWA health centers.

The study used the descriptive analytical methodology and has collected original data from study subjects. The sample consisted of 380 beneficiaries at health care centers and 73 health employees at these centers as well. Two separate questionnaires were distributed as the key tools for data collection. A third tool in a form of detailed checklist was also employed and filled out by all directors of these health centers to collect data about the available infrastructure, human, and material resources. The researcher used different statistical techniques to analyze the data and to describe results.

The findings of the study showed that patient's evaluation of the degree of the quality of UNRWA's health services was high according to quality dimensions (empathy, security, reliability, response), as appeared in their responses, and they are not limited to them. Nevertheless, they reported that staff maintain confidentiality of their information status, respect their privacy, and that they trust doctors and nurse's experience and knowledge to provide the required care. In addition, beneficiaries noticed that health workers at UNRWA's centers were tactful and they welcome patients with sympathy, responded rapidly to their inquiries, and provided treatment to them at the appropriate time.

On the other side, Health professionals' evaluation for the quality of health services they are providing at UNRWA's centers was medium as reflected in the three dimensions of quality that are adopted by the current study, namely: responsiveness, reliability, and security. This is

because service providers are more aware than beneficiaries of the requirements of improved quality. Health workers realize the obstacles they have when providing the service.

The study also addressed the obstacles that reduce the quality of health services from both the point of views of patients and employees. Patients considered the lack of all needed drugs, lack of necessary and sufficient lab tests, lack of attention to facility cleanliness, and the length of waiting time to receive treatment as the main factors that are reducing quality at UNRWA's health centers. On the other hand, workers mentioned the lack of clear mechanisms to improve the quality of services, shortage of health personnel especially nurses, centralization at the clinic, and the inadequate use of patients appointment system as the main barriers that reduce the quality of health services at their centers.

The study recommends that there is a need to restructure health care centers according to professional principles and scientific criteria, adopting proper improvement policies, employing more diversified and specialized medical cadres, expand the scope of services that is not limited to primary care, providing more medical devices and laboratory equipment that are necessary to meet the needs of patients and staff, and modernizing the centers' infrastructure in order to ensure a healthy environment that is able to meet the needs and achieve the desired quality in health services provision.

Key words: Quality, UNRWA Health Care Centers, patients, professionals, Palestine.

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