

Quality of Services Provided for COVID-19 Disease in the Primary Health Care of Canton Sarajevo

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Abstract

Introduction: Quality health services is a priority in the health system. However, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the goals of the health system had to be adapted to the changed circumstances, in order to meet the health needs of patients and the expectations of health workers related to ensuring safe working conditions in a crisis.

Aim: To examine the attitudes and opinions of patients on the quality of services provided during treatment for the infection of COVID-19

Research material and methods: The study included patients aged 18 and over at the Sarajevo Canton Health Center who were infected with the COVID-19 virus in the second (autumn 2020) and third (spring 2021) waves of the pandemic and who used primary health care services during their treatment. To conduct the research,

we surveyed a total of 524 patients in the period from 15 September 2022 – 30 November 2022.

Results: By the recommendations of the Crisis Staff of the Ministry of Health and the rules of the profession, the majority of respondents contacted the doctor on the third day after the onset of symptoms, 193 of them (36.8%). During the second and third wave, the majority of patients, 287 (54.8%) believed that there were no health workers during that period who did not behave professionally during the treatment. During treatment and visits to healthcare institutions, 72 (13.7%) patients felt that they always felt that healthcare professionals treated them differently. During treatment for COVID-19, 78 (14.89%) patients believed that there were always enough health workers during their treatment.

Conclusion: a large number of respondents think that the healthcare professionals treated them professionally during the treatment, and that they had enough information about the situation, and that they acted in accordance with the instructions published by the profession.

Keywords: quality of health care, primary health care, COVID-19

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Introduction

The first case of coronavirus in Bosnia and Herzegovina was confirmed on March 5, 2020. in Banja Luka, and in a short time, it spread rapidly throughout the country.

Organizing in the conditions of a pandemic all over the world, and therefore also in BiH, was quite complex with numerous conflicting opinions and information, which affected the quality of the health services provided.

Measuring the quality of health services provided can be challenging because it can have many different definitions and components (1).

According to Donabedian, the quality of health care can be reflected through three components: structure (including health facility infrastructure, equipment, and goods), process (the health care provider's method of providing care, including interpersonal interaction with the client and technical competence), and outcome (the outcome of the service provided such as their satisfaction with services) (2).

Providing quality health services is a priority in the health system. In addition, providing quality services can result in reduced organizational costs, increased productivity, increased employee satisfaction with services, and increased client satisfaction (3).

Primary care doctors play a vital role in the health of individuals, families and communities. Serving as the first point of contact and as dedicated, longitudinal care advocates, they also have ongoing responsibility for the comprehensive health care needs of their patients—chronic, preventive, and acute - in all care settings. Personal contact with medical professionals has proven to be one of the biggest challenges during the conditions caused by COVID-19, which have limited patients' access to medical facilities and social mobility (4).

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the goals of the health system had to be adapted to the changed circumstances, so as to meet the health needs of patients, but also the expectations of health workers related to ensuring safe working conditions in a crisis situation (5).

The goal of the research is to examine the attitudes and opinions of patients on the quality of services provided during treatment for COVID-19 infection.

Material and Research Methods

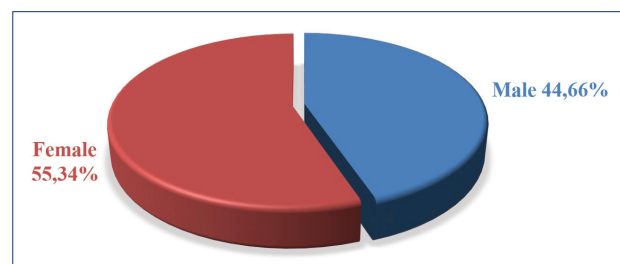
The study included patients aged 18 and over at the Sarajevo Canton Health Center who were infected with the COVID-19 virus in the second (autumn 2020) and third (spring 2021) waves of the pandemic and who used primary health care services.

In order to conduct the research, we surveyed a total of 524 patients in the period from 15 September 2022 – 30 November 2022. The research included a response to the original survey questionnaire.

Attitudes and opinions of patients treated for COVID-19 in primary health care were assessed based on an original questionnaire that was validated and piloted. The basis for creating the questionnaire is the WHO Checklist. A 5-point Likert response scale was used (0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often, 3 = almost always, 4 = always).

Results

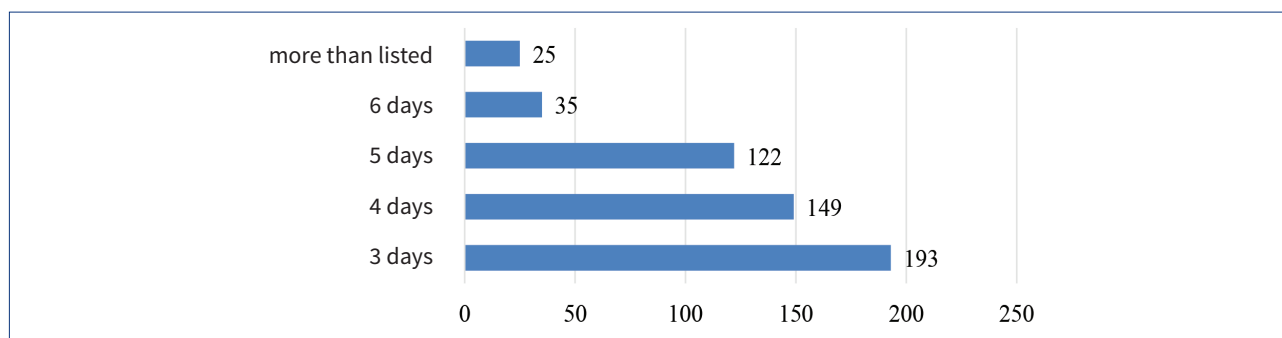
In the research "Response of the primary health care system in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic", the responses of 524 patients were analyzed.



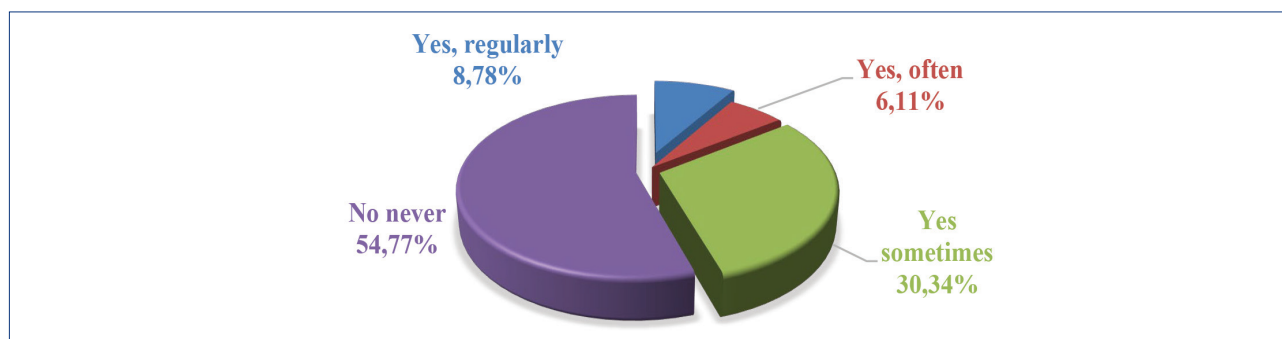
Graph 1. **Gender structure of respondents**

234 (44.66%) female respondents and 290 (55.34%) male respondents participated in the research.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Crisis Staff of the Ministry of Health and the rules of the profession, the majority of respondents contacted the doctor on the third day after the onset of symptoms, 193 of them (36.8%).



Graph 2. Time from the onset of symptoms to the time of reporting to a doctor



Graph 3. Relationship of healthcare workers during treatment for COVID-19

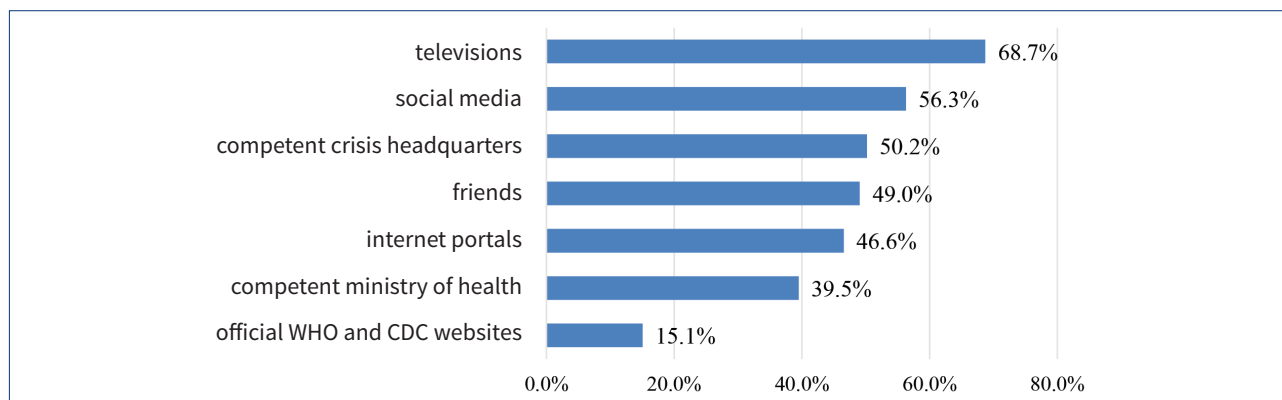


Chart 4. Informing patients

Another 149 (28.4%) respondents visited the doctor on the fourth day, and 122 of them (23.3%) on the fifth day. On the sixth day, 35 (6.7%) respondents reported to a doctor, and on the seventh day or after the seventh day, another 25 (4.8%) respondents reported.

During the second and third wave, the majority of patients 287 (54.8%) believe that there were no healthcare workers during that period who did not behave professionally during treatment.

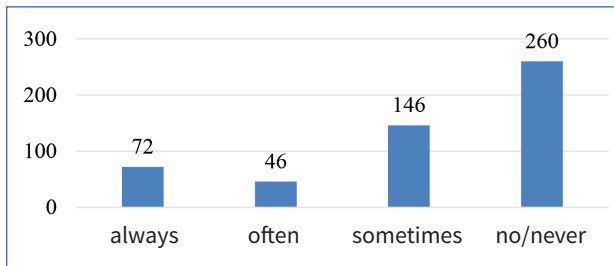
159 (30.3%) patients believe that the healthcare professionals were sometimes unprofessional during tre-

atment, and 32 (6.1%) patients believe that they are often unprofessional. 46 (8.8%) patients believed that healthcare professionals were regularly unprofessional.

Patients included in the study mostly state that they received information about the infection with the COVID-19 virus through television, with 360 (68.7%) patients stating the same. The second most frequent source of data was social networks, which was stated by 295 (56.3%) patients.

The third source of data was the publications of the competent cross headquarters, which was followed by

263 (50.2%) patients. Internet portals were followed by 244 (46.6%) patients, and 207 (39.5%) patients received the information from the Ministry of Health. 257 (49.0%) patients stated that they also received information from friends. 79 (15.1%) patients followed the data and publications from the official websites of the US Center for Disease Control and WHO.



Graph 5. **Feeling of discrimination among patients treated for COVID-19**

During treatment and visits to healthcare institutions, 72 (13.7%) patients felt that they always felt that healthcare professionals treat them differently. 46 (8.8%) patients often had the same feeling, and 146 (27.9%) patients sometimes had the mentioned feeling. 260 (49.6%) patients stated that they had never experienced different treatment due to COVID-19.

A smaller number of patients offered suggestions for improving the health system’s response. Out of the total number of patients, 45 (8.6%) believe that the patient journey should be improved, and 34 (6.5%) patients stated that more healthcare workers are necessary. 5 (1.0%) patients stated that it is necessary to provide more me-

dical equipment. 4 (0.8%) patients believe that it is necessary to take greater precautionary measures, and 3 (0.6%) patients believe that better education is needed.

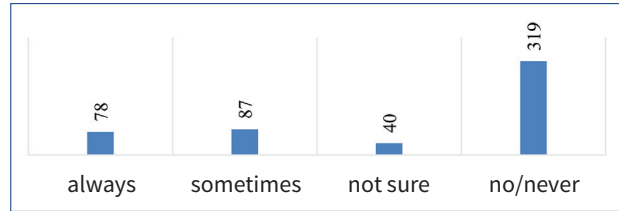


Chart 7. **Sufficient number of healthcare workers during treatment for COVID-19 infection**

During COVID-19 treatment, 78 (14.89%) patients believed that there were always enough health workers during their treatment. 87 (16.6%) patients believed that sometimes there were enough healthcare workers. 40 (7.63%) patients felt that they were not sure whether the number of healthcare workers was sufficient. 319 (60.88%) patients believed that there were never enough healthcare workers.

93 (17.7%) patients fully agreed and 193 (36.8%) patients partially agreed with the opinion that telephone communication with health professionals during treatment was an efficient way of solving certain issues related to the disease, without going to a health facility. A neutral attitude was found in 147 (28.1%) patients. 25 (4.8%) patients partially disagreed, and 66 (12.6%) patients completely disagreed

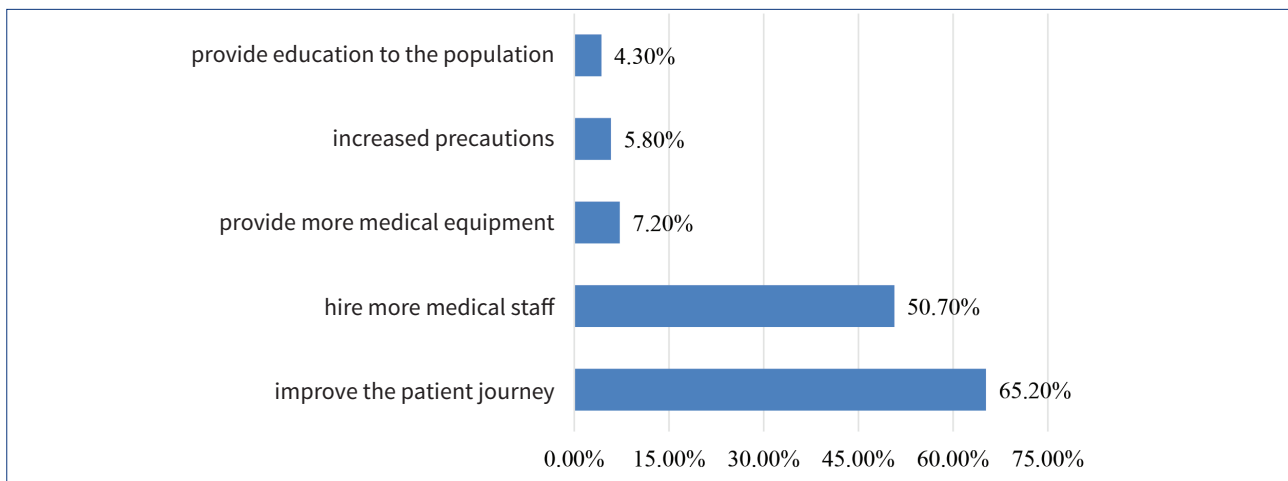


Chart 6. **Patients’ suggestions for improving the health system’s response**

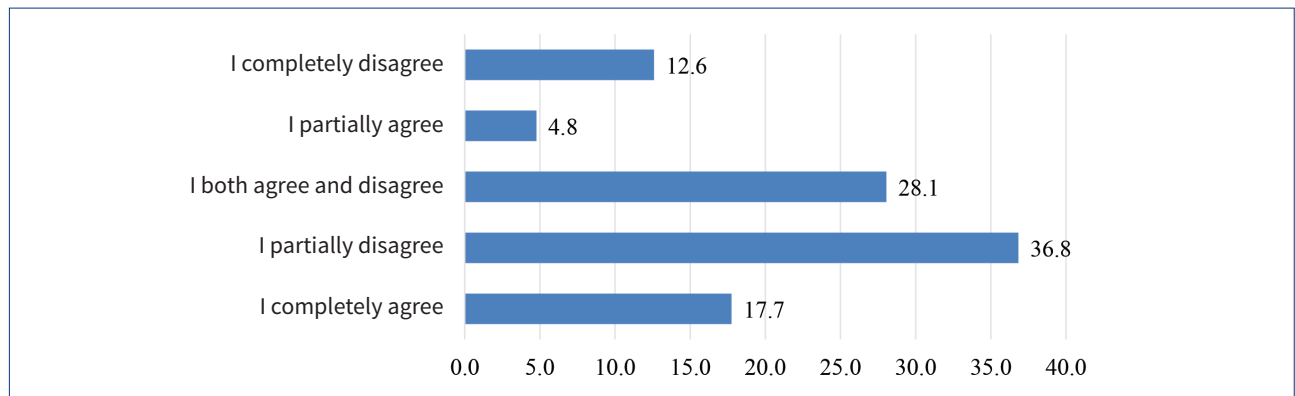


Chart 8. Telephone communication with health professionals

Discussion

In accordance with the recommendations of the Crisis Staff of the Ministry of Health and the rules of the profession, the majority of respondents contacted the doctor on the third day after the onset of symptoms, 193 of them (36.8%). On the fourth day, another 149 (28.4%) respondents responded, and on the fifth day, 122 of them (23.3%). On the sixth day, 35 (6.7%) respondents reported, and on the seventh day or after the seventh day, another 25 (4.8%) respondents reported. The American Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the WHO had the same recommendations (6,7).

During the second and third wave, the majority of patients 287 (54.8%) believed that the healthcare professionals behaved professionally during the treatment. 159 (30.3%) patients believed that health workers were sometimes unprofessional during treatment, and 32 (6.1%) patients believed that they were often unprofessional. 46 (8.8%) patients believed that healthcare workers were regularly unprofessional. According to the authors Westbrook J. et al., the biggest problem with the occurrence of such behavior is reflected in the burnout of healthcare workers.

The authors examined the occurrence of unprofessional behavior in 7 hospitals in metropolitan areas in Australia. They found that 38.8% of respondents reported that healthcare workers were unpleasant, and 14.5% reported extremely unprofessional behavior on the part of healthcare workers (8).

Pavithra et al. found that unprofessional behavior towards patients was often the cause of disputes between

health personnel, especially in the disagreements of nurses with the views of doctors (9).

During treatment and visits to healthcare institutions, 13.7% of patients stated that they always felt that healthcare professionals treated them differently. 8.8% of patients often had the same feeling, and 27.9% of patients sometimes had the mentioned feeling. In a study in Poland, Rewerska Jusko et al. found that at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, stigmatization of patients with COVID-19 was present, which had numerous negative consequences, including limited access to health services, potential impact on patients' health and worse outcomes. Early recognition of the problem can help implement appropriate strategies to combat stigma (10).

A smaller number of patients offered suggestions for improving the health system's response. Out of the total number of patients, 8.6% believe that the patient journey should be improved, and 6.5% of patients stated that more healthcare workers were necessary. 1.0% of patients stated that it was necessary to provide more medical equipment. 0.8% of patients believed that it was necessary to take greater precautionary measures, and 0.6% of patients believed that better education was needed. The reason for the lower shares is reflected in the fact that the majority of respondents did not answer the above question. In 2021, Jean Louis Vincent and colleagues published a study describing what was done well and what could have been done better in the first three waves of the COVID pandemic. It was observed that more resources should have been provided in preparation for the pandemic, when it was already suspected that it represented a disease of public interest. Another important factor in the preparation was previous establishment of international collaborations,

and the reduction of enthusiasm for treatments and the prescription of drugs that have not been proven to help in the fight against the COVID-19 disease. The problem was in the reorganization of the staff and better setting up of medical institutions, especially intensive care units (11).

During treatment for COVID-19, 14.89% of the patients in this study believed that there were always enough health workers during their treatment. 60.88% of patients believed that there were never enough health-care workers. Only 17.7% of patients fully agreed with the opinion that telephone communication with health professionals during treatment was an efficient way of solving certain issues related to the disease, without going to a health facility, with 36.8% of patients also partially agreeing.

Conclusion

Examining the attitudes and opinions of patients about the quality of services provided during treatment for COVID-19 infection through the original survey questionnaire indicates that a large number of respondents think that the healthcare workers treated them professionally during treatment and that they had enough information about the situation and that they behaved following the instructions published by the profession.

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KVALITETA PRUŽENIH USLUGA TIJEKOM BOLESTI COVID-19 U PRIMARNOJ ZDRAVSTVENOJ ZAŠTITI KANTONA SARAJEVO

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Sažetak

Uvod. Pružanje kvalitetnih zdravstvenih usluga prioritet je u zdravstvenom sustavu. Međutim, nakon izbijanja pandemije bolesti COVID-19, ciljevi zdravstvenog sustava morali su se prilagoditi promijenjenim okolnostima, kako bi se zadovoljile zdravstvene potrebe pacijenata, ali i očekivanja zdravstvenih radnika povezana s osiguranjem sigurnih uvjeta rada u kriznoj situaciji.

Cilj. Ispitati stavove i mišljenje pacijenata o kvaliteti pruženih usluga tijekom liječenja od bolesti COVID-19.

Materijal i metode istraživanja. U studiju su uključeni pacijenti u dobi od 18 i više godina Doma zdravlja Kantona Sarajevo koji su bili inficirani virusom SARS-CoV-2 u drugom (jesen 2020.) i trećem valu (proljeće 2021.) pandemije i koji su se koristili uslugama primarne

zdravstvene zaštite tijekom svojeg liječenja. U periodu od 15. rujna do 30. studenoga 2022. radi provođenja istraživanja ukupno smo anketirali 524 pacijenta.

Rezultati. U skladu s preporukama Kriznog štaba Ministarstva zdravstva i pravilima struke, većina se ispitanika liječniku javila treći dan od pojave simptoma, njih 193 (36,8 %). Tijekom drugog i trećeg vala većina pacijenata (287 – 54,8 %) smatra da u tom periodu nije bilo zdravstvenih radnika koji se nisu odnosili profesionalno tijekom liječenja. Pri tretmanu te posjetu zdravstvenim ustanovama 72 (13,7 %) pacijenta smatrala su da uvijek osjete kako ih zdravstveni radnici drugačije tretiraju. Sedamdeset osam (14,89 %) pacijenata smatra da je uvijek bilo dovoljno zdravstvenih radnika tijekom njihova liječenja od bolesti COVID-19.

Zaključak. Velik broj ispitanika misli da su se zdravstveni radnici profesionalno odnosili prema njima tijekom liječenja te da su imali dovoljno informacija o nastaloj situaciji i da su se ponašali u skladu s uputama koje je objavljivala struka.

Ključne riječi: kvaliteta zdravstvene usluge, primarna zdravstvena zaštita, COVID-19