

Emergency Department! Is It Urgent?

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The term emergency is used for life-threatening diseases that result in death if not treated. Examples of emergency diseases include sudden respiratory and cardiac arrest, myocardial infarction, cerebrovascular accident, multiple trauma, and acute abdomen.

Emergency services are the busiest showcases of hospitals, working 24/7 and constantly visible. These units, whose primary duty is to treat and heal truly urgent patients, are unfortunately often misused by patients and their relatives. Due to situations such as expediting work and using laboratory facilities, the number of patients in emergency services is higher than it should be (1). For this reason, we aimed to evaluate whether the patients applying to the emergency service of our third-level hospital were truly urgent, to evaluate their results, and thus to understand whether emergency services really provide services to urgent patients.

Patients applying to the emergency service of XXX University in a one-month period were evaluated retrospectively from computer records. Patients were examined in terms of age, gender, arrival date and time, arrival complaint, diagnosis, outcome, place of stay and number of days of stay. When 900 patients who applied to the emergency department were evaluated: The most common age group was 20-30 with 28%, and the least common age group was 0-10 with 6%. 48% of all patients were male and 52% were female. Patients came most frequently on Fridays and Mondays. 10.00-11.00 (17%) was the most common application time. When patients were evaluated in terms of their complaints; the most common complaints were sore throat with 26% and abdominal pain with 20%. The most common diagnoses were upper respiratory tract disease and abdominal pain etiology. 140 (14%) of the patients were admitted, 760 (76%) were

discharged. Orthopedics and pediatric services were the most common hospitalization services (20 patients-2%). The average hospitalization period was 5 days. Emergency services are the busiest and most exhausting units of hospitals that deal with hundreds or thousands of patients and their relatives per day. Patients or relatives who come to the emergency service, perhaps for the first time in their lives, are in a panic and may dramatize the incident even if it is not really urgent and may express short-term complaints in order for their work to be resolved as soon as possible. This puts the emergency service personnel in a difficult position, increases their workload and delays reaching real patients. The fact that emergency services are free of charge also increases the number of patients. Studies have evaluated the number of patients admitted to the emergency service, deaths, referrals from other hospitals, diagnostic tests and treatments, and it has been determined that 68.7% of the patients applied appropriately. In the study conducted by O'Brien et al., three different evaluation methods were compared, and since these methods are incompatible with each other, it was suggested that caution should be exercised in determining suitability for the emergency service. Another study reported the rate of patients who were not suitable for the emergency service as 24.2% (1-5). The data we obtained are similar to the information and studies available in the literature, and the majority of the patients do not meet the criteria for real emergency patients.

As a result, when patients brought to the emergency department are evaluated, the high number of patients who are treated as outpatients and discharged suggests that most of these patients are not truly emergency patients. In line with the studies to be conducted, real emergency patient criteria should be established and patients should be evaluated according to these criteria. Emergency departments operating with an

intensive and stressful work tempo should not be abused, they should not make it difficult to help patients who are truly urgent, and in this context, the public should be made aware.

Keywords: Emergency Department, Real Emergency Patients, Public Awareness

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