

Abstract

OBJECTIVES:

Concerns about medical errors have recently increased. An understanding of how patients conceptualise medical error would help health care providers to allay safety concerns and increase patient satisfaction. The aim of this study was to evaluate patients' worries about medical errors and their relationship with patient characteristics and satisfaction.

METHODS:

This descriptive cross-sectional study was done in the Emergency Department (ED) of a university hospital over a one week period in October 2008. A questionnaire was used to assess patients' worries about medical errors and their satisfaction levels both at an initial interview and by telephone 7 days after discharge. Data were gathered and analysed by χ^2 , t-tests and logistic regression.

RESULTS:

Of 638 patients interviewed, 61.6% declared their satisfaction rate as good to excellent; (93 [14.6%] as poor; 152 [23.8%] as fair; 296 [46.4%] as good; 97 [15.2%] as excellent). A total of 48.3% of patients (44.5-52%, with confidence interval 95%) were concerned about the occurrence of at least one medical error. There was a clear relationship between the general satisfaction rate and having at least one concern about a medical error (Chi-square, $P < 0.001$).

CONCLUSION:

This study showed that many patients were concerned about medical errors during their emergency care. Due to the stressful situation in EDs, patients' safety and satisfaction could be improved by a better understanding of patient concerns, education of ED staff and an improvement in the patient-doctor relationship.