

Assessment of South Indian women's perspective on healthcare in India

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Background

Tremendous growth in the Indian economy and a rise in medical tourism have led to national improvements in the healthcare system and enabled Indians to seek a higher quality of healthcare.

Although India is known for its low healthcare costs for high quality services, quality continues to vary among hospitals.

Research Objective

The purpose of this study was to explore South Indian women's perspective on Indian healthcare today and gauge their awareness of recent innovations in the healthcare system.

Study Design

A survey was administered to women in obstetrics/gynecology clinics in Coimbatore and online during a three week period. Respondents completed a 21-item questionnaire assessing (1) sociodemographic characteristics and (2) the factors influencing participants' choice of hospitals for medical care and perspectives on Indian healthcare. Descriptive analyses were conducted.

Study Population

Those who completed the survey in the health facilities were patients, family or friends accompanying patients, healthcare workers and other staff. A website was also distributed to the community. Inclusion criteria for the study were (1) 18 years of age, (2) female, (3) a minimum of a high school education and (4) the ability to read and write English.

Contact information

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Results

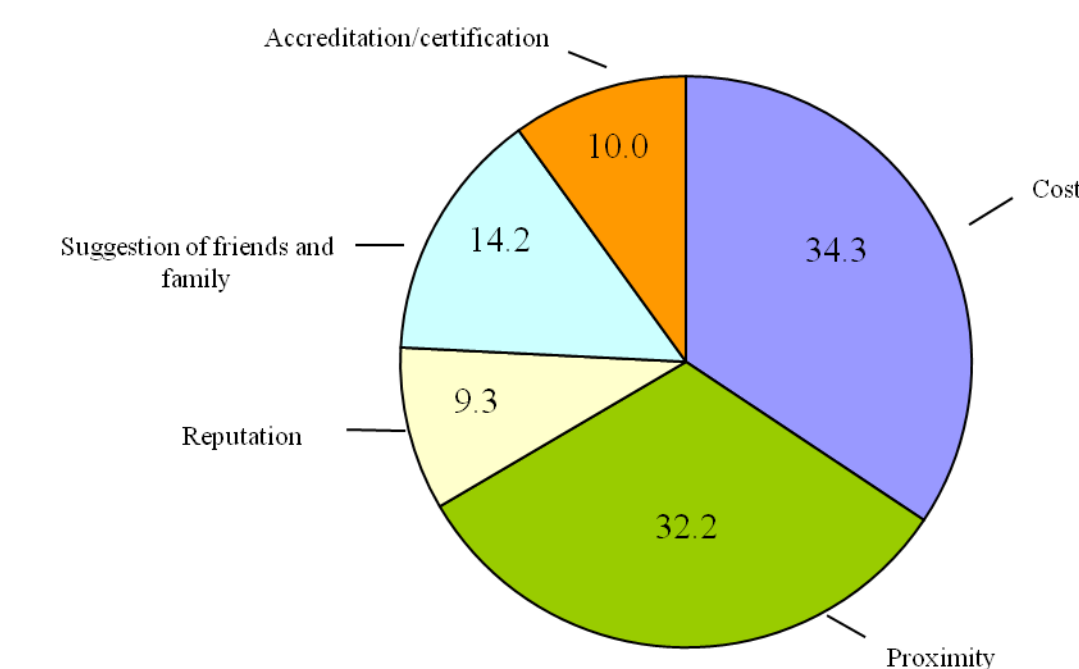
| Population Characteristics | N (%) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Source of Information (n=288) | |
| Obstetrics/gynecology hospital or clinic ¹ | 257 (89.2) |
| Internet | 31 (10.8) |
| Participant's role in the clinic/hospital (n=244) | |
| Patient | 111 (45.5) |
| Patient's friend or relative | 37 (15.2) |
| Doctor | 13 (5.3) |
| Nurse | 14 (5.7) |
| Medical or nursing student | 51 (20.9) |
| Other | 18 (7.4) |
| Age (n=288) | |
| Mean | 28.3 |
| Standard Deviation | 8.7 |
| Highest level of education completed (n=283) | |
| High School | 110 (39) |
| Undergraduate | 74 (26) |
| Postgraduate/Doctorate | 95 (33.6) |
| Other | 4 (1.4) |
| Occupation (n=271) | |
| Professional | 84 (31) |
| Business | 30 (11) |
| Agriculture | 11 (4) |
| Homemaker | 86 (31.7) |
| Other | 60 (22.1) |
| Annual Income (in Indian rupees) n=201 | |
| Above 10 lakhs ² | 9 (4.5) |
| Between 5-10 lakhs | 9 (4.5) |
| Between 2-10 lakhs | 26 (13) |
| Below 2 lakhs | 157 (78) |
| Management of medical expenses (n=280) | |
| Self-paid (out-of-pocket) | 188 (67) |
| Insurance/employer or government sponsored medical coverage | 92 (33) |
| Location (n=288) | |
| Tamil Nadu | 248 (86) |
| Kerala | 21 (7) |
| Karnataka | 15 (5) |
| Andhra Pradesh | 4 (1) |

¹Kongunadu hospital, Sonovision Scan Centre, KG Hospital, Woman and Child Care

²1 lakh rupees = \$ 1,924

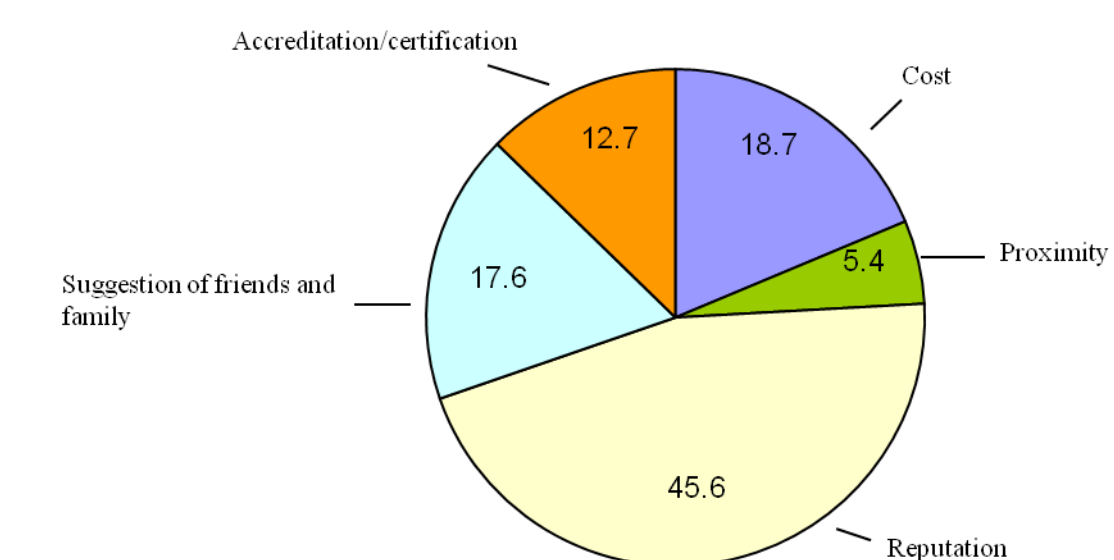
| Perceptions of the Indian healthcare system | N (%) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Is there a large difference in the quality of care offered by hospitals in your area? (n=288) | |
| Yes | 209 (72.6) |
| No | 33 (11.5) |
| Not sure | 46 (16) |
| Is there a large difference in the cost of care offered by hospitals in your area? (n=286) | |
| Yes | 205 (71.7) |
| No | 35 (12.2) |
| Not sure | 46 (16.1) |
| Awareness of healthcare quality systems used in Indian hospitals (n=288) | |
| Scorecard | 19 (6.6) |
| Lean | 6 (2.1) |
| SixSigma | 29 (10.1) |
| International Organization for Standardization (ISO) | 163 (56.6) |
| Total Quality Management (TQM) | 81 (28.1) |
| Accreditation | 40 (13.9) |
| Not aware of any of the above | 74 (25.7) |
| Hospital Choice (n=273) | |
| Inexpensive, uncertified hospital | 62 (22.7) |
| Expensive, quality certified hospital | 211 (77.3) |
| Does improvement in quality increase costs? (n=281) | |
| Yes | 165 (58.7) |
| No | 115 (40.9) |
| Not sure | 1 (.4) |

Criteria used to choose hospital for routine care (% of responses)



Each participant was asked to choose two answers. Number of respondents = 284. Number of responses = 562

Criteria used to choose hospital for serious or life-threatening ailments (% of responses)



Each participant was asked to choose two answers. Number of respondents = 270. Number of responses = 535

Implications for Study

Results of this study indicate the need for addressing wide differences in medical care quality among hospitals in South India. Regardless of the variety of quality systems in Indian healthcare, most participants perceived that quality is associated with high cost. Implementation of new quality systems will need to address costs for the patient due to low rates of medical insurance. Furthermore, public perceptions will need to be changed in order to reduce the association between cost and quality perceptions.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Vani Mohan helped us get approval to administer the survey in the four healthcare facilities.