

DETERMINANTS OF REFERRAL AMONG PATIENTS TRANSFERRED FOR EMERGENCY SURGICAL OPERATION FROM SECONDARY LEVEL HOSPITALS TO TERTIARY LEVEL HOSPITALS IN DAR ES SALAAM REGION, JUNE - OCTOBER 2013

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To assess the determinants of referred patients for emergency surgical operation from second level hospitals to tertiary level hospitals in Dar es Salaam region. Little information is documented for the determinants of referral of general surgery patients for emergency operations.

METHODOLOGY: The cross-sectional descriptive hospital based study, conducted at emergency department of MNH in a period of five months in 2013. A total of 363 patients were referred from second level hospitals to tertiary level hospital in Dar es Salaam region during the study period.

RESULTS: The determinants grouped into four main groups and several small sub groups in each main group. The 62.5% of referred patients required urgent attention and the remaining 37.5% were cold cases. The type of disease/diagnosis was first main group; the leading referral disease about half of all referrals due to diseases were musculoskeletal conditions 50.7%, followed by gastrointestinal diseases 26.7%. Lack or shortage of the health personnel was second main group; The leading shortage of personnel was about 36.6% referrals was due to the shortage of General Surgeons, 29.8% due to shortage of Orthopedic Surgeons and 15.15% referrals due to shortage of Neurosurgeons. The lack of equipment was third main group; leading factor was lack of investigation services about 33.3% referrals, lack of sterile gauze at the theaters was about 24.8% and lack of sterile trays for surgeries was about 18.5%. The insufficient infrastructure was fourth main group; leading factor were due to overcrowding of patients in the surgical wards about 68.9% referred patients due to few beds in the surgical wards, followed by lack of ICU facility about 16.0% of referred patients and overcrowding of patients waiting theatre service 15.2%. Only 25.3% of all referred patients were due to patient's request (or self referral) and Mwananyamala hospital was the leading hospital for referring many patients, for about 53.4% of referred patients.

CONCLUSIONS: The determinants of the referred surgical patients showed some similarities and difference in some aspects, to other studies done in Tanzania and in Africa. High rate of referral of general surgical patients for emergency treatments to tertiary level hospital could be minimized if; theatre, surgical clinics standards and management are followed at the second level facilities.