

Patient satisfaction with emergency oral health care in rural Tanzania

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First published: 14 February 2007 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0528.1998.tb01963.x>

Abstract –

Emergency oral health care, as conceived in Tanzania, is an on-demand service provided at a rural health center or dispensary by a Rural Medical Aide. The service includes: simple tooth extraction under local anesthesia, draining of abscesses, control of acute oral infection with appropriate drug therapy, first aid for maxillo-facial trauma, and recognition of oral conditions requiring patient referral for further care at the district or regional hospital dental clinic. The objective of the present study was to describe patient satisfaction with emergency oral health care services in rural Tanzania and determine the relative importance of factors influencing patient satisfaction. The study was carried out as a cross-sectional interview survey between April 1993 and May 1994 using a patient satisfaction questionnaire in rural villages in the Rungwe district of Tanzania. It included 206 patients aged 18 years or more who had received emergency oral health care between April 1993 and March 1994. Overall, 92.7% of the respondents re-reported that they were satisfied with the service. Patients who were married, had no formal education and lived more than 3 km from the dispensary were more likely to be satisfied with treatment. In a logistic regression model, a good working atmosphere at the dispensary, a good relationship between care provider and patients (art of care) and absence of post-treatment complications significantly influenced patient satisfaction with odds ratios of 10.3, 17.4 and 6.2, respectively.