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ABSTRACT

Causes and Consequences of Overcrowding Inside Emergency Departments on Patients Care at Main Governmental Hospitals in Gaza Strip

Hasan K. H. Hamdan¹, Isam Awadallah², Ahmed M. Z. Eid³, Khaled A. A. Siyam⁴, Mohammed T. B. Abdalgafoor⁴, Baraa M. A. Alasttal⁵, Tayseer Jamal Afifi⁶, Mosheer Safi Al-Dahdouh⁶, Mustafa Ahmad Abu Jayyab⁶, Ahmed M. Alghazali⁶, Khamis Elessi⁷.

¹ *University of Bahri, Faculty of Medicine, Gaza/Palestine.*

² *Consultant of General Surgery, Al-Shifa medical complex.*

³ *Ain Shams University- Egypt.*

⁴ *University of Bahri- Sudan.*

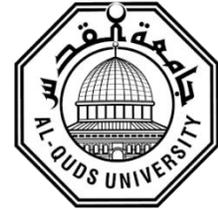
⁵ *Alexandria University Egypt.*

⁶ *Islamic University-Gaza.*

⁷ *Prof. Dr. & Head of EBM unit, Medicine School, IUG.*

Background: The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians [CAEP] and National Emergency Nurses Affiliation [NENA] defines Emergency department (ED) overcrowding as a situation in which the demand for emergency services exceeds the ability of physicians and nurses to provide quality care within a reasonable time.

Overcrowding in emergency centers is a worldwide concern and represents an international crisis that may affect access to health care and the quality of services, In ED overcrowding the function of the ED is impeded primarily because of the number of patients waiting to be attended to, undergoing assessment and treatment or waiting for departure exceeds the physical or staffing capacity of the emergency department. Overcrowding is the product of several hospital internal and external factors. Although the triggers of overcrowding in emergency centers are complex, multi-factorial and beyond the control of the emergency center, the key reason is that emergency centers are normally too small and understaffed for the population they serve, ED overcrowding



can occur due to mass casualty accidents, or can occur due to other conditions causing a shortage of hospital beds and Increased workload of the health staff. Increased patient presentations and limited resources all of which may lead to a consequential adverse effects, increased morbidity, mortality, increased length of stay (LOS), and an overall inferior health care and poor outcomes.

With ED overcrowding, doctors and nurses are saddled with the responsibilities of providing care to patients in an environment with restricted or diminished resources. Recognizing the influence of overcrowding in providing care to patients in the ED will help in developing strategies for coping with or preventing overcrowding and setting the appropriate expectations required of the hospital management.

Objectives: To study the causes and consequences of overcrowding inside Inside departments on patient care at main government hospitals in the Gaza Strip.

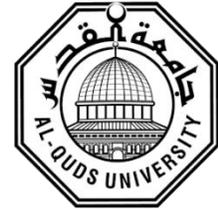
Methods: This is a descriptive cross-sectional hospital-based study, conducted in four major hospitals in Gaza: “Al-Shifaa Medical Complex, Naser Medical Complex, the Indonesian Hospital, and the European Hospital”. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. 289 questionnaires were included in the data analysis. The data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics 23.0.

Results: The results revealed that “patients seen at the ED are coming for a non-emergent complaint” was the major cause of ED overcrowding (91%), followed by “inadequate ED staff salary” (90.8%). According to the findings, the commonest consequences of ED overcrowding were “decreased staff job satisfaction” and “increased chances of violent confrontation between families and the ED staff” (82.6%), followed by “increased stress and workload among physicians” (79.6%).

Conclusion: ED overcrowding is a major patient safety problem, with studies indicating that it increases the number of patients leaving the ED without being seen, the length of stay (LOS), medical errors, and morbidity and mortality.



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Keywords: ED overcrowding, emergency department, causes, contributing factors, consequences, doctors, nurses, patient safety, non-emergent complaints, stress, workload, length of stay, medical errors, morbidity, and mortality.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to the mentioned authors at the mentioned institutes.

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E-mail: research@admin.alquds.edu

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