

Hospital Administrators' Opinions toward the Prevalence of Patient Dumping in Taiwan

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: The purposes of this paper were to examine whether patient dumping has occurred under the National Health Insurance and to explore hospital administrators' attitudes toward the practice of patient dumping in Taiwan. **METHODS:** The study subjects were administrators in general hospitals that were accredited by the Taiwan Joint Commission on Hospital Accreditation as medical centers, regional hospitals, or district teaching hospitals in the years 2000 and 2001. A self-administered postal survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire mailed to 128 administrators in general hospitals. **RESULTS:** Of the respondents, 83 of 99 (83.8%) administrators perceived that patient dumping did occur in their service areas to a certain degree regardless of their hospital location, hospital level, or hospital ownership. A total of 67 of 74 (90.5%) administrators who attempted to answer the question on the prevalence of patient dumping perceived that different percentages (mean=13.27%) of hospitals transferred patients solely on economic considerations in their service areas. In addition, this study found that no statistically significant relationships existed between the administrators' perceived percentage of emergency patients received by their hospitals and hospital characteristics. However, there was a statistically significant relationship between the perceived percentage of inpatients received and hospital level ($p = 0.007$). **CONCLUSION:** According to the results of this study, we concluded that patient dumping is a serious and widespread problem in the healthcare industry in Taiwan. Patient dumping can jeopardize patient health and impair the financial integrity of receiving hospitals. Implementation of a case payment system may worsened the situation in Taiwan.