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A study of the morbidity pattern of referred patients and the effectiveness of the referral system in primary health care centers.

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Abstract

Patient referral system is considered to be an important element in achieving the objectives of the Primary Health Care services. Patients attending the Primary Health Care Center (PHCC) expect basic medical care and appropriate follow-up services. Thus, patients requiring further evaluation and treatment are referred to a secondary health care facility. In this study the morbidity pattern as well as the referral system was evaluated in selected PHCC in the city of Jeddah. A systematic random sample of all the patient referrals from selected PHCC's were analyzed. A total of 1,164 referrals were studied, 59.9 per cent were females and 40.1 per cent were males. The contents of referral letters from PHCC to hospitals as well as feed back from hospitals were analyzed. The majority of referrals were for the age group 25-44 years old 458 (39.3%). The results demonstrated that 5 per cent of patients were routinely referred to the secondary health care centers, and the feedback from these secondary health care facilities was (22.7%). It was also noted that the majority of referral letters lack commonly accepted standards of information about the patient. It was concluded that the follow-up and feed-back system needs to be reinforced. The primary health care providers need to review the patient referral system and implement specific criteria for the optimum utilization of this essential service for the benefit of the community.