

Original Research Article

Utilisation of University Health Care Centre Services among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study assesses utilisation of university health centre services in the past 6 months and perceived barriers towards utilisation among university students.

Methods: Using cross-sectional design, a self-administered questionnaire was collected from 240 students. Frequencies were used to illustrate students' utilisation, health conditions they presented with, and their perception of barriers.

Results: Health centre services were used by less than half of the students in the past 6 months, with the most frequent health conditions for utilisation being influenza (23.5%), headache (14.7%) and abdominal pain (11.8%). About 64.6% of the students were satisfied with health centre services. However, unavailability of drugs (22.5%), medical staff/student relationships (17.1%), medical staff and doctors' experience (10%), inadequate referral services (8.3%), and long waiting time (5%) were barriers perceived by students to affect their utilisation.

Conclusion: This study highlights university students' health-seeking behaviour that will help to promote health among Jordanian university students.

Keywords: Utilisation, University health centre, Health services.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, young adults account for around 1.8 billion of the world's population.

^[1] Jordan is a small country in the Middle East and young adults account for a great proportion of its total population as around 1.43 millions Jordanians are young adults.

^[2] Of these, around 268,150 are university students. ^[3]

University is a place where students receive their education, training, develop life skills and learn how to become more independent. ^[4] In order to ensure the great advantage of university, students should have healthy minds and healthy bodies. Hence, university administrators developed health care services to meet students' physical and mental health needs. ^[5]

Utilisation of health care services by university students were well reported in international literature but not in Jordan. ^[6-8]

A cross-sectional study of 250 undergraduates found that approximately 45.8% of the students visited the university health care centre. ^[7] In Dubai, 38.5% of the students utilised the university health care services. ^[8]

Several health conditions were identified by students in previous literature that promote students' utilisation of health care services; these were fatigue, headaches and allergies. ^[9] In Africa, additional health conditions such as malaria, typhoid and stomach pains were also reported. ^[10] However, university students identify some barriers that affect their utilisation of health care centre services; these are the cost, waiting time, insufficient health information, unfriendly attitude of health care employees and medication shortage. ^[10,11]

Regardless of the driving and hindering forces behind the utilisation of health care services, university students' level of satisfaction varied greatly; [10,12,13] while 63% of Malaysian university students were dissatisfied, the Nigerian students were satisfied. [12,13]

A comprehensive literature review revealed little in-depth evaluation available regarding students' utilisation of university health care services. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the main health conditions that promote Jerash University students utilisation of health care services and main barriers that hinder their utilisation.

METHODS

Design

A cross-sectional design was used to assess the percentage of university students who utilise health care services and to determine the type of conditions students present with, and to identify the main barriers to utilisation of health centre services at Jerash University. This university is located within Jerash governorate, in the north of Jordan. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes through 11 faculties. The health care facility available within it includes a primary health care centre with 8-hour and free treatment services. The services provided include emergency, general physician clinic, pharmacy, and lab services.

Participants

A convenience sampling technique was used to recruit 240 participants from three faculties at Jerash University. Inclusion criteria were:

- Student registered for the second semester 2015-2016.
- Student has Jordanian nationality.

The exclusion criteria were being an international student.

Instrument

The questionnaire, which was based on the literature review, covered 10 questions in three parts:

- Socio-demographic: This part was used to collect data on each student's age (years), gender (male or female), faculty (nursing, economic & accounting, and humanities) and level of academic year (first, second, third, fourth or more year).
- Utilisation of health centre services. This part was assessed retrospectively by asking students the following: Do you remember your last visit to your university health centre during the past 6 months? For positive responses, students were then asked, What was the reason for the visit?
- Satisfaction and perceived barriers part: Overall satisfaction was assessed by asking students the following: Are you satisfied regarding university health centre services? (yes or no). Students' perception of barriers affecting their utilisation were measured depending on indicators that included: availability of medications, referral service, waiting time, experience of medical staff, medical staff/student relationships. They were assessed by asking students to specify if some perceived barriers limited their utilisation of their university health care centre services (yes or no).

Two steps were taken to improve the content validity of the study questionnaire. First, a relevant literature review was conducted to choose a number of variables for the study that might influence students' utilisation of the university health care services. Second, the content and face validity of the questionnaire for the present study was conducted by a panel of three academic staff.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the ethical committee of the Jerash University. Written informed consent was obtained from each student after a full description was given regarding the study purpose, anonymity and confidentiality of data collected.

RESULTS

The collected data were entered and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. The results were presented using descriptive statistics of frequencies, mean and percentages.

Characteristics of students

Of the 240 students that participated in this study, 125 (52%) were females and 115 (48%) were males. The mean age of participants was 23.3 years old (SD = 4.3). The students were classified into three academic disciplines: nursing 102 (42%), economic & accounting 68 (28%), and humanities 70 (30%). The dominant group among the students was the third year students 75 (31%), whereas the least represented group was first year students 41(17%) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Participants (n = 240).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean (S.D)
Age			23.3 (4.3)
Gender:			
Male	115	48%	
Female	125	52%	
Faculty:			
Nursing	102	42%	
Economic & accounting	68	28%	
Humanities	70	30%	
Level of year:			
First year	41	17%	
Second year	58	24%	
Third year	75	31%	
Fourth year & more	66	28%	

Utilisation of university health centre services

About 102 (42.5%) of the students had used the university health centre services at least once in the past 6 months and about 138 (57.5%) had not used the health centre services.

Among the students who utilised the university health centre services in the past 6 months, the most frequent health conditions for utilisation were influenza 24 (23.5%); headache 15 (14.7%) and abdominal pain 12 (11.8%), while the less frequent health conditions for use were eye

problems 2 (2%), insect sting 1 (1%) and burn 1 (1%) (see Table 2).

Table 2: Utilisation and health conditions that make students utilize university health centre services (n = 240)

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Utilisation of health care centre services:		
Yes	102	42.5%
No	138	57.5%
Health conditions for utilisation:		
Influenza	24	23.5%
Headache	15	14.7%
Abdominal pain	12	11.8%
Tonsillitis	7	6.9%
Fever	7	6.9%
Hypotension	6	5.9%
Stress & anxiety	6	5.9%
Allergy	5	4.9%
Respiratory tract infection	4	3.9%
Gastrointestinal problems	4	3.9%
Dizziness	4	3.9%
Cough	2	2.0%
Eye problems	2	2.0%
Insect sting	1	1.0%
Burn	1	1.0%

Students' satisfaction and perception of barriers affecting their utilisation

Table 3 shows that 155 students, representing (64.6%), were satisfied with the university health centre services and the remainder were not satisfied with the services. The main reasons behind dissatisfaction were related to unavailability of drugs 54 (22.5%); medical staff/student relationships 41(17.1%), experience of medical staff 24 (10%), inadequate referral services 20 (8.3%). Long waiting times for treatment 12 (5%) was the barrier least perceived by students to affect their utilisation of university health care centre services.

Table 3: Students' perception of barriers affecting their utilisation of university health centre services (n = 240)

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Overall satisfaction regarding health centre services	155 (64.6%)	85 (35.4%)
Barrier		
Unavailability of medications	54 (22.5%)	186 (77.5)
Medical staff- students relationship	41 (17.1%)	199 (82.9%)
Experience of medical staff	24 (10%)	216 (90%)
Inadequate referral services	20 (8.3%)	220 (91.7%)
Long waiting time for treatment	12 (5%)	228 (95%)

DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that the rate of university health centre services utilisation by students in the past 6 months

was less than 50% and this is close to the percentages reported in recent studies. [7,8] The similarity of findings among studies may confirm that university students' health concerns are universal regardless of geographical area. Future studies ought to assess in detail the kinds of university health centre services that are utilised by students (e.g. services may be classified into medical service, nursing service, drug prescription, laboratory service and referral service).

The health conditions that made students utilise the health centre services were similar to those found in a previous study. [9] This indicates poor health literacy among students, which should be addressed in future studies.

The current study indicated that about two-thirds of the students were satisfied with the university health centre services. This finding was in agreement with a Nigerian study. [13] However, only the overall level of satisfaction was measured. There is a need to measure sub dimensions of satisfaction such as pharmaceutical, nursing, and clinical services to obtain a detailed view of the situation in the health care centres.

Unavailability of medications was the most significant barrier encountered by students when they used the university health centre and impacted on their future utilisation. This is in line with past studies; [10,11] Such barrier may limit utilisation of health centres by students and cause them to prefer to use self-medication. [14] Therefore, university administration should devote more of the university budget towards health care to make medication available.

Staff-student relationships were also perceived as a barrier that students encounter when they utilised the university health centre services. However, this result differs from that of. [13] This may imply a poor attitude towards the students by medical staff. Such attitudes can discourage health care seeking behaviours, [15] whereas caring attitudes of medical staff and their communication skills can help to achieve high quality health services for young

adults. [16] Health care personnel should receive proper communication skills classes, which may help in understanding of students' health needs and showing an empathetic attitude.

Experience of medical staff was another barrier identified by university students. This result agrees with a prior study on possible barriers affecting students' utilisation of the university health centre. [11] Implementation of training programmes for medical staff regarding the health care of students may help to overcome such a barrier and improve utilisation of the services.

The current study found inadequate referral services as another barrier perceived by students which may influence their utilisation of the health centre. A previous study classified inadequate referral services as the most perceived barrier. [13] Developing the quality of health services needs an efficient referral system. [17] Such a system may help to make the utilisation of primary health services and hospitals more cost effective. [18]

The last barrier identified by students, waiting time for treatment, was the least perceived barrier students encountered when they utilised the university health centre services. This finding was in agreement with a previous study. [11] Previous studies revealed that long waiting time is a main cause of patient dissatisfaction, [19] and it may have an effect on health care services utilisation; [19] it encourages patients to use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). [20]

Limitations

The current study has some limitations. Health centre services utilisation was self-reported, which may result in recall bias. Also, the results cannot be generalised to health centre services in other private and governmental universities.

CONCLUSION

The present study added to the body of knowledge in community health nursing

regarding university students' health-seeking behaviour which will promote health among Jordanian university students. In addition, it informs administrators of the universities about existing health services, and helps in planning and allocation of resources. Future plans to develop university health centre services must address the barriers perceived by students to affect their utilisation. Finally, this study could be replicated in other universities in Jordan.

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