

Healthcare Costs and Related Factors of a Patient Attending a Medical Clinic of a Tertiary Care Government Hospital in Sri Lanka

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Most Sri Lankan studies that determined healthcare costs have been restricted to inpatient care. Our objective was to calculate the healthcare costs and related factors of a patient attending a medical clinic at Teaching Hospital Karapitiya. Our study was a descriptive cross-sectional study with a cost analysis component. Data was collected from randomly selected 277 patients by an interviewer-administered questionnaire and a data sheet during October 2023. Costs for medicine and investigations were calculated by obtaining data from clinic books and available price lists. The results revealed that 71.4% of patients were unemployed without any source of income of their own. The average distance to the hospital was 16.4km. Public transport was used by 77.2% of the patients. The average travel cost for a patient for one month was Rs 360 whereas the average loss of income for a patient per month was Rs 40. The average monthly cost incurred by the hospital for a patient's medications was Rs 918. The average monthly cost for the investigations for a patient incurred by the hospital was Rs 266.30. Meanwhile on average a patient spent Rs 434 and Rs 333 respectively per month to buy medicine from outside and for investigations ordered from outside. The results indicate that 32% of the medicine cost and 55% of the investigation cost were spent out of patient pocket. The results indicate that patients who seek free healthcare services from outpatient departments bear a significant out-of-pocket expenditure despite their financial dependence considering the costs for medicine and investigations.

Keywords: *healthcare cost, out-of-pocket expenditure, medical clinic*