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ASSESSMENT OF THE AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF MEDICAL SERVICES FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE (ON THE EXAMPLE OF ZHYTOMYR CITY)

Over the last five years, namely from 2014 to 2019, Ukraine's core population has decreased by 3.3 million[3]. The share of people aged 60+ has increased markedly as of 01.01.2019, thus, it currently stands for 23.4% of the total population and is one of the highest in the world. In particular, within Zhytomyr region elderly people formed about 22.8% of local population [4].The healthcare sector with its initial purpose of improving the health status of the population, as well as reducing disability and number of premature deaths, has played a major role in this process (the state of human health by 10% depends on the level of development of medicine, a component of which is the quality of healthcare). [7, c. 305]. In addition, economical issues have intensified lately all over the territory of Ukraine, as well as the migration rates and negative population growth have increased.

In this regard, it is important to improve the health status and prolong the active employment and life of the elderly people in general, because their involvement in the country's economy improves the situation, reducing morbidity, saving resources of the healthcare sector, decreasing disability rates, and eases the burden on the pension fund, etc. [2].

The aim of our research is to determine the level of accessibility and quality of medical services from the perspective of elderly individuals in order to identify opportunities to improve the process of providing medical services in Zhytomyr healthcare facilities.

Quality of medical services is defined as "the set of properties and characteristics of a service or product that ensure its ability to meet the identified needs of the consumer", thus, the patient is identified as the consumer of this product, so his/her opinion on quality is essential [1]. Accordingly, for the right promotion strategy it is important to know which characteristics consumers consider the most important, for the availability of healthcare services is influenced by many factors. Even if the quality of the particular service provided meets the requirements, the total quality of the healthcare process may vary [6, c. 405]. An important role in providing quality medical care plays the reputation of the healthcare facility and properties of healthcare providers themselves (appearance, attitude to the patient and his/her relatives, trust etc.)[5, c.17].

The research hypothesized that for older patients, the primary criterion for quality of healthcare is attention and trust, moreover, the criterion for quality of healthcare services is the positive tendency of treatment and quick recovery.

Thus, in order to achieve this goal, a marketing (field) survey of 750 people aged 60+, according to the World Health Organization classification, was carried

out during the year. The obtained data was processed by mathematical and statistical research methods.

We have identified that older men and women alike seek medical assistance with the following rate: 62% do it often; 34% - rarely; and only 4% do not seek treatment at all for various reasons, but mostly due to lack of funds. When assessing the quality and accessibility of healthcare services, patients consider many factors such as: location of the facility, safety and security (avoidance of contamination or disease spread among the patients), lack of queues and large crowds, professional up-to-date equipment, skilled medical staff, courteous and friendly attitude, ability to easily enroll for admission and availability of infrastructure (presence of pharmacies, canteens, restrooms, apparels for handicapped people etc.). A considerable number of respondents (38%) are satisfied with the level of medical services provided, as evidenced by the survey results shown in (Fig. 1).

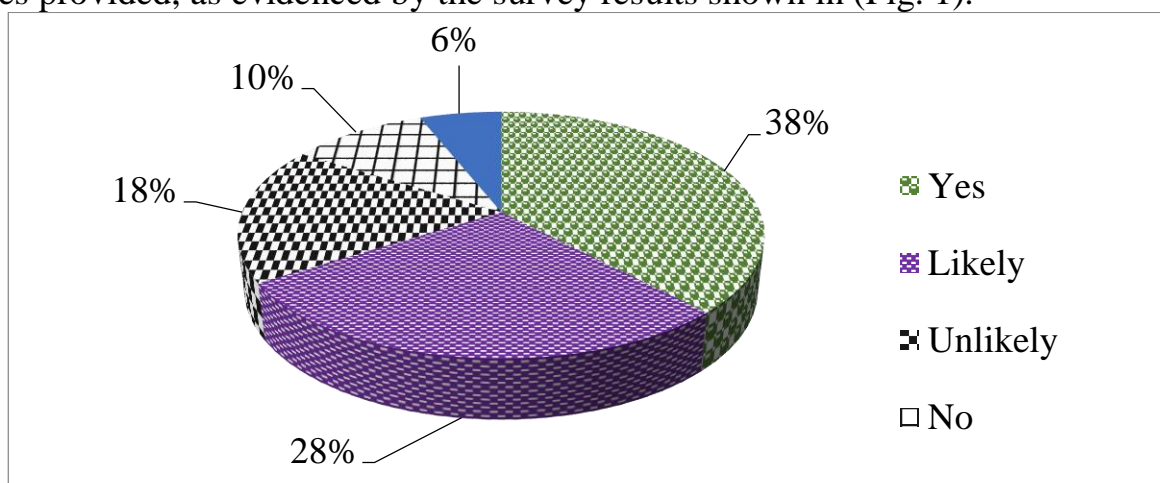


Figure 1. The level of satisfaction of consumers with medical services in private and public health care establishments in Zhytomyr city

Most elderly people rated the level of quality of medical services as “Good” (46%), and only 2% of respondents marked it as “Unsatisfactory” (Fig. 2).

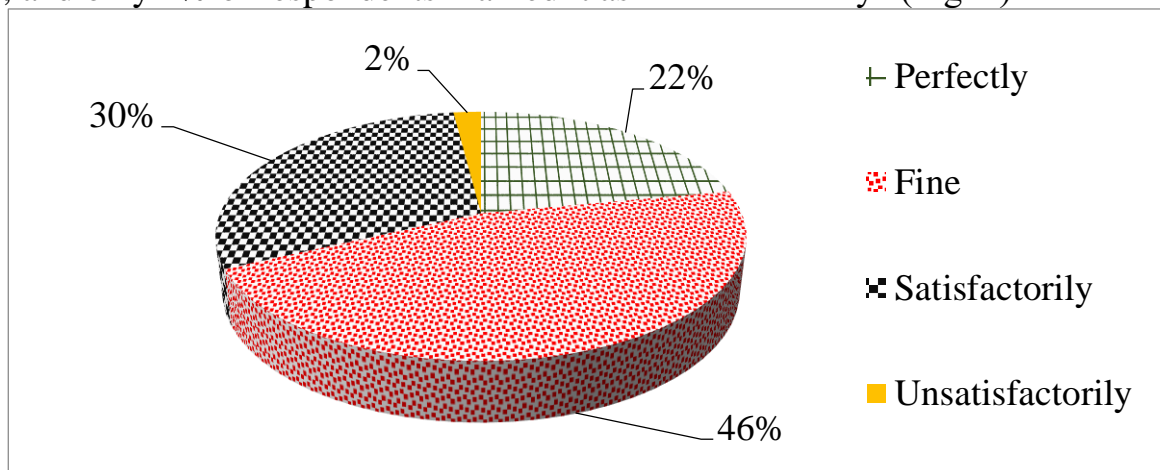


Figure 2. Level of quality of medical services in private and public health care facilities in Zhytomyr city

Most consumers of medical services (48%) think that paid medical services are better than free and meet the price-quality characteristic. The majority (60%) seek paid medical services, 73.3% of which use them frequently. The reasons for seeking paid medical services are different (Fig. 3).

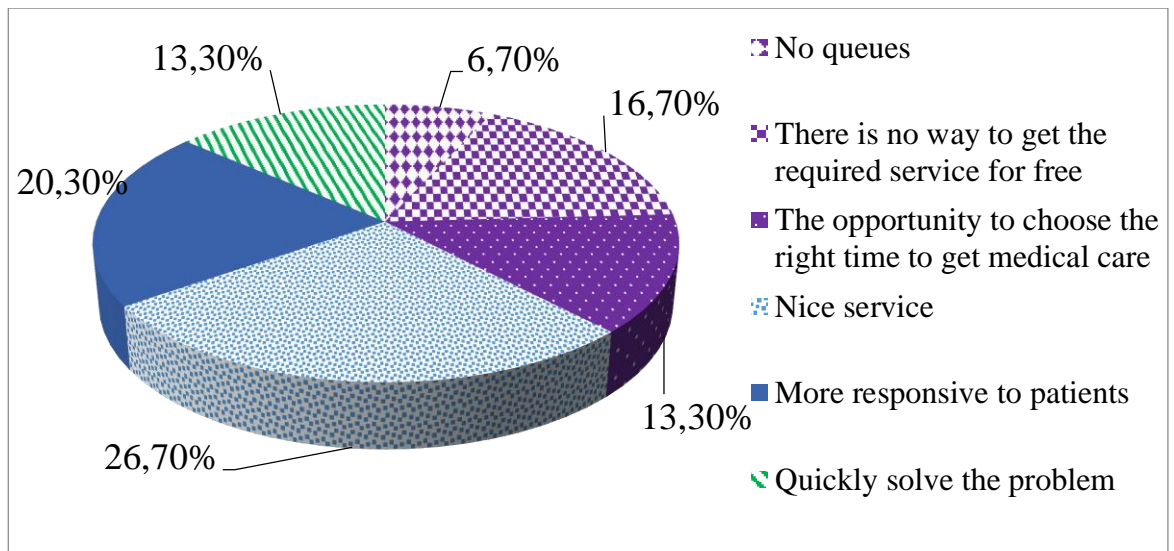


Fig. 3. Reasons to apply for paid medicine services

The main reasons for accessing paid healthcare services for elderly people are the difference in the care process compared to budgetary healthcare facilities. 26.7% of respondents noted the need for comfort of the internal environment of the institution, responsive attitude to patients - 20.3%, while the inability to get the required service for free - 16.7% of the respondents.

Conclusions. According to the definition of the World Health Organization, the quality of medical services is an indicator of how the services provided to individuals and citizens improve their health. In these circumstances, there is a potential imbalance between supply and demand, the number of patients and the quality of healthcare in the public and private healthcare sectors of Zhytomyr region. The conducted marketing research allowed to confirm the hypothesis stated. Today, it is necessary to improve not only the quality of the medical services, but also the conditions of service for the patients (the elderly clients in particular), for which different marketing measures are applied. It must be noted that human resources of the city and the whole country are of the most significant importance.

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