

# Health – Related Services Provided for Hospitalized Hajjees During Shifting to Arafat, 1420 H.

The visit of Hajjees to Arafat is a fundamental part of Hajj. The Ministry of Health transports its Hajjee patients hospitalized in Makkah to Arafat to complete their Hajj rituals. There is a need for a better understanding of the needs of these transported patients (TPs) for further improvement of this service. The objective of this study is to describe the characteristics of the TPs and their satisfaction with this service.

A questionnaire inquiring about demographic characteristic, diagnosis, and mode of transportation of each TP was completed in all governmental hospitals in Makkah. During the trip to Arafat, observations were recorded. After the trip, using the list of the TPs provided by hospitals, a sample of TPs was selected from each hospital. Patients were interviewed and requested to assess their satisfaction and needs using a structured questionnaire.

The study included 285 TPs, most of who were from King Abdulaziz hospital (98 or 34.4%) and Al-Noor specialist hospital (77 or 27%). Their mean age was 60 ±12 years with a 1.8:1 male to female ratio. One hundred and fifteen TPs (40%) were Arabs from countries other than GCC and 86 (30.2%) were from the Indian subcontinent. The majority were patients admitted to the medical ward (53.7%) and complaining of respiratory diseases (26%). A total of 81% were transported by buses on regular chairs, 17.5% by buses on beds, and 1.4% by ambulances. Among those admitted to either Intensive or coronary care units (ICU, CCU), 71.4% were transported on regular chairs, 9.5% on beds, and 19% by ambulances.

Concerning the service, all the TPs expressed their satisfaction with the quantity of food and drinks, and 96% were satisfied with the quality of food. During the trip, 64% believed that the temperature was adequate, 20% felt very cold, and 16% felt very

hot in the vehicles. Among 46% of the TPs who felt a desire to pass urine, 52% did not, since no toilets were available. A third of the TPs believed that they would have been unable to go to Arafat without this service. Nine percent believed that their health condition became worse after the trip. Half of the TPs gave suggestions; 83% suggested to complete other Hajj rituals, 9% to provide toilets, and 9% to facilitate movements at Arafat gates.

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**Editorial note:** The MOH, in cooperation with other ministries, carries out an important service to hospitalized hajjee patients by transporting them to Arafat, thus enabling them to complete their hajj rituals. Although MOH services are appreciated by most TPs, there is a need for continuous improvement of this service.

Transportation of ICU and CCU patients is a risky task and may need further investigation and more precautions. In the USA, Stearley reported that the national complication rates for intrahospital transportation of ICU patients to radiology department were as high as 75%.<sup>1</sup> The diversity of the severity of illnesses necessitates the application of a risk score. Wide application of risk score for TPs has permitted effective assigning of technical and human resources for safe interhospital transfer of critically ill patients.<sup>2</sup>

Hospitals used different criteria to select candidates for transportation. Development of clear selection criteria for TPs should help reduce potential risks during transportation.

Promotion of health and religious education should also minimize the potential risk during the transportation process and consequently achieve a

higher level of satisfaction with this service.

## References:

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