

Satisfaction of patients and caregivers towards pharmacy value-added services during the COVID-19 pandemic in Hospital Sibul, Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Pharmacy Value Added Service (VAS) is an initiative by the Ministry of Health to help ease patients in collecting their medication supply. It includes Drive-Through Pharmacy (DT), Local Partial Medication Supply Service, locally known as Pusat Pembekalan Ubat Susulan Setempat (PPUSS), Integrated Drug Dispensing System, locally known as Sistem Pendispensan Ubat Bersepadu (SPUB), Medicine by Post, locally known as Ubat Melalui Pos (UMP) and Call-and-Collect Service, locally known as Telefon & Ambil (T&A). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of patients subscribing to VAS more than doubled. Our objective is to determine the satisfaction towards VAS received. **Methods:** This was a single-centre, cross-sectional study in the outpatient pharmacy of Hospital Sibul, involving patients and caregivers who received at least one prescription refill using VAS between February to May 2022. Data was collected using a validated self-administered questionnaire adapted from a previous study. **Results:** A total of 356 responded. The majority were male (186, 52.2%), Chinese (184, 51.7%), with tertiary education (144, 40.4%) and self-employed (122, 34.3%). The overall mean satisfaction score was 4.56 (SD:0.57) out of 5. Respondents viewed time-saving as the most significant benefit with a mean score of 4.63 (SD: 0.55) followed closely by cost-saving with a mean score of 4.61 (SD 0.57). Factors influencing the choice of VAS include age ($p<0.001$) and education level ($p<0.001$), with younger and more educated respondents opting for UMP instead of DT. Suggestions to improve include longer operating hours (12, 3%) and more service counters (5, 1%). **Conclusion:** The majority of respondents recorded high satisfaction towards VAS. The pharmacy department may consider increasing the types of VAS to cater to the needs of a wider population.