

FACTORS INFLUENCING PERCEIVED NEEDS FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AMONG ELDERLY PATIENTS FROM FOUR PROVINCES IN THAILAND

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Abstract. Thailand has an aging population. This study aimed to determine factors affecting the perceived needs for emergency medical services (EMS) among elderly patients from 4 provinces in Thailand to better understand the emerging medical expectations based on services received and related factors affecting the study population. Study subjects were purposely selected from those who accessed EMS during the previous 6 months; 600 were selected randomly during the study period of March-May, 2016. For the study, we selected 4 provinces: 2 with the highest and 2 with the lowest use of EMS by the elderly in Thailand. Each subject was asked to complete a questionnaire using face-to-face interviews after providing informed consent. The total score for perceived needs for EMS were classified as high, moderate and low arbitrarily. The association between variables and perceived needs for EMS were assessed using the chi-square test. Ninety-two point two percent of study subjects were able to carry out daily routines without assistance, 83.9% had at least one chronic disease and 18.0% were disabled. Eighty-five percent of study subjects expected a high level of EMS; specifically, staff who knew the route, staff who understood the on-scene condition and safety in the emergency van. Being unemployed, residing in an urban area, being unable to dress one's self, having a disability and having health insurance were all significantly associated with having a higher perceived need for EMS ($p < 0.05$). There was a great perceived need for EMS in the study subjects. The factors associated with a greater perceived need by the study subjects need to be taken into consideration by efforts to meet perceived EMS needs in this population.

Keywords: perceived needs, emergency medical services, elderly, Thailand

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