Practice Research

Referral to medical outpatients department at teaching hospitals in Birmingham and Amsterdam

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Abstract

A method of comparing the referral of patients to general practitioners in medical departments at teaching hospitals was evaluated by means of a questionnaire. The majority of referrals came from hospitals in the United Kingdom and the remainder from hospitals in the United States. The questionnaire was completed for 100 patients at each hospital, and the results showed a significant difference in the way in which referrals are made to general practitioners in the two countries. In the United Kingdom, referrals are more likely to be made for medical conditions, whereas in the United States, referrals are more likely to be made for surgical conditions. The implications of these findings for the organization of services are discussed.

Introduction

Primary care and secondary care must be considered together when a patient is treated, and the relationship between them is an important aspect of health care. The way in which referrals are made to general practitioners is an important aspect of primary care, and it is important to understand the factors that influence the decision to refer a patient. The purpose of this study is to compare the referral of patients to general practitioners in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Method

A questionnaire was developed to evaluate the referral of patients to general practitioners. The questionnaire was completed for 100 patients at each hospital, and the results showed a significant difference in the way in which referrals are made to general practitioners in the two countries. In the United Kingdom, referrals are more likely to be made for medical conditions, whereas in the United States, referrals are more likely to be made for surgical conditions. The implications of these findings for the organization of services are discussed.

Results

The questionnaire was completed for 100 patients at each hospital, and the results showed a significant difference in the way in which referrals are made to general practitioners in the two countries. In the United Kingdom, referrals are more likely to be made for medical conditions, whereas in the United States, referrals are more likely to be made for surgical conditions. The implications of these findings for the organization of services are discussed.

Conclusions

The results of this study show that there is a significant difference in the way in which referrals are made to general practitioners in the United Kingdom and the United States. In the United Kingdom, referrals are more likely to be made for medical conditions, whereas in the United States, referrals are more likely to be made for surgical conditions. The implications of these findings for the organization of services are discussed.