

Thai Physicians' Career Satisfaction

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The purposes of this cross-sectional study were to collect data regarding satisfaction and influencing factors related to satisfaction of Thai Physicians. The survey was conducted during October 2002 to March 2003. Study subjects were 440 physicians obtained by systematic random sampling. They were asked to reply posted questionnaire and telephone interviewed later if they did not reply the mailed questionnaire.

The authors could obtain data from 380 out of 440 cases (86.3%), 60.3% were male and 39.7% were female. Their average age was 43.9 and 37.7 years, respectively, with an overall average of 40.9 years. The level of career satisfaction of Thai Physicians was high (60.2%), moderate (37.2%) and low (2.6%). Conclusively the factors which influenced or predicted satisfaction of Thai physicians were age, exercise and accident. The author make some recommendations for improving Thai physicians' satisfaction.

Keywords: Satisfaction , Thai physician

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This was the first study, to our best knowledge, to systematically explore satisfaction of Thai physicians. This was part of the study to promote health of Thai physicians supported by The Thailand Research Fund¹. Previous studies on satisfaction of registered nurses and other medical personnel in hospitals¹⁻⁶ revealed that their satisfaction was generally moderate, but low satisfaction on: salaries, wages, and fringe benefit. Factors related to their satisfaction were being promoted, and getting higher paid. Studies in the United States on newly graduated physicians^{7,8} revealed their low satisfaction in non-uniform or mal-managed medical practice. Strong predictors of their satisfaction seemed to be improvement of their quality of life especially reduction of fatigue from medical practice⁸⁻¹² Landon et al¹³ studied physicians' satisfaction and its change year by year and found no significant changes. Satisfaction depended on income, work hour, and the ability to take care of their quality of life^{14,15}

Physicians have long been recognized as health team leaders, received social respect and high expectation from the population at large. If they are lack of satisfaction in their career, they will not be happy at work. Consequently, they may be under a lot of stress and this may eventually affect their families. Some may quit their job especially those in civil service, resulting in higher work load of the remaining physicians and hence their higher stress. On the other hand, this will definitely has a negative impact on patients and general population. One way to alleviate this problem is to satisfy physicians more in order to keep them in the service system, especially those who newly enter the career. Prior to that, we should understand what satisfies them. And this was the objective of this study.

Methodology

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study and was part of the study on Thai physicians' health survey.¹ The study was conducted during 1 October 2002 and 1 March 2003 by mailed questionnaires to 440

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systematically randomized physicians, followed by telephone interview for most of the study subjects who did not reply the mailed questionnaire. Finally, we could obtain 380 responses.

Results

The response rate was 86.3 percent. Sixty point three percent were male and 39.7 percent were female. Their average age was 40.9 years, 43.9 for male and 37.7 for female. The majority of them were highly satisfied with their physician career (60.2 percent), 37.2 percent were moderate, and 2.6 percent were low. Male physicians were highly satisfied 61.4 percent, moderately 34.6 percent, and low 3.9 percent. Whereas, the corresponding figures for female were 58.3, 41.1, and 0.7 percents, respectively.

Their average income was 64297.7 Baht per month. Most were married with average 2 kids. Eighty five percent regularly exercised. Their sleep time was 6-8 hours per day. In the past 6 months, 9.2 percents experienced an accident.

Analyses by t-test revealed that physicians with higher satisfaction were significantly older than those with moderate or low satisfaction. This was also the case for their spouse's age. We also found that physicians with high satisfaction were likely to be married than those with moderate or low satisfaction ($p=0.009$). Other positive factors on bivariate analyses were: not exposed to loud noise during work ($p=0.009$), not having a diabetic mother ($p=0.004$), not having an accident in the past 6 months ($p=0.001$), regularly exercise ($p=0.034$), taking care of or performing an operation on patients with HIV ($p=0.01$), doing management jobs ($p=0.001$), doing jobs other than clinical work ($p=0.001$), and not being sick in the past 6 months ($p=0.004$).

When performing bivariate analyses on co-factors, we found that taking care of or performing an operation on patients with HIV associated with not being exposed to loud noise ($p=0.001$), not doing management jobs ($p=0.03$), not doing jobs other than clinical work ($p=0.005$), and doing clinical work ($p=0.001$).

Physicians who had this year annual check up associated with having annual check up in the past year ($p=0.001$), doing management jobs ($p=0.012$), doing jobs other than clinical work ($p=0.008$), and doing regular exercise ($p=0.008$). Physicians with sickness in the past 6 months associated with not exercise ($p=0.028$). Physicians doing management jobs associated with not doing work other than clinical work ($p=0.001$), and doing clinical work ($p=0.025$).

Table 1. Relationship between satisfaction and other factors (chi-square tests)

satisfaction	Marital status		total	p-value
	single	married		
low to moderate	69	76	145	0.009
high	80	155	235	

satisfaction	Exposure to noise			total	p-value
	every-day	some day	not exposed		
low to moderate	4	67	74	0	0.009
high	3	77	154	1	

satisfaction	Mother was diabetic		total	p-value
	no	yes		
low to moderate	117	33	150	0.004
high	203	24	227	

satisfaction	Accident in the past 6 months		total	p-value
	no	yes		
low to moderate	125	25	150	0.001
high	216	12	228	

satisfaction	Exercise		total	p-value
	no	yes		
low to moderate	30	121	151	0.034
high	26	202	228	

Table 2. Multiple logistic regression model for physicians' satisfaction

factor	B	df	p-value	Exp (B)	95% CI	
					lower	upper
age	0.026	1	0.005	1.026	1.008	1.045
exercise	0.6781	1	0.026	1.969	1.084	3.576
accident	-1.346	1	0.009	0.260	0.122	0.553
constant	-1.774	1	0.009	0.170		

Note: The relationship could be expressed as an equation: Log odds (high satisfaction / moderate or low satisfaction) = $-1.774 - 1.346 \times \text{accident [yes vs no]} + 0.678 \times \text{exercise [yes vs no]} + 0.026 \times \text{age [year]}$; whereas Exp (B) = 1.026 for age, = 1.969 for exercise and = 0.260 for accident.

Table 2 showed that, by multiple logistic regression analyses with consideration of collinearity¹⁶ among co-factors, factors associated with physicians' satisfaction were: age, exercise, and not having accident in the past 6 months.

The equation suggests that having accident reduce physicians' satisfaction, whereas doing exercise and getting older increase physicians' satisfaction.

Discussion

The majority of physicians highly satisfied with their career, and this associated with their age, spouse's age, marital status, income, work duration, running a clinic, doing part time job, and exercise. Factors associated with low satisfaction were: having accident in the past 6 months, exposed to loud noise during work, having a diabetic mother, and long work hour per week.

When adjusted for confounders by multiple logistic regression analyses, we found 2 positive factors (age and exercise), and one negative factor (having an accident in the past 6 months, associated with physicians' satisfaction).

Based on these results, we would like to make suggestions for promoting physicians' satisfaction:

1. taking good care of newly graduated young physicians in terms of their quality of life, fringe benefit, income, and wages, in order to make them more willing to do their job
2. promoting all physicians of all age to exercise
3. trying to prevent accidents occurring to physicians in all settings, including occupational and non-occupational.

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ความพึงพอใจในวิชาชีพของแพทย์ไทย

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การศึกษานี้เป็นการสำรวจความพึงพอใจของแพทย์ เป็นการศึกษาเชิงพรรณนาแบบตัดขวางเก็บข้อมูลของแพทย์ทั่วประเทศที่ยังมีชีวิต ระยะเวลาเก็บข้อมูล 1 ตุลาคม 2545 ถึง 1 มีนาคม 2546 โดยการใช้แบบสอบถามส่งทางไปรษณีย์ และวิธีการสัมภาษณ์ทางโทรศัพท์ โดยวัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยครั้งนี้ เพื่อศึกษาความพึงพอใจในวิชาชีพแพทย์ และศึกษาปัจจัยที่มีความสัมพันธ์หรือมีอิทธิพลต่อความพึงพอใจในวิชาชีพแพทย์ไทย

จากการสุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวนแพทย์ที่ทำการศึกษา 440 ราย เก็บข้อมูลได้ 380 ราย คิดเป็นร้อยละ 86.3 เป็นชายร้อยละ 60.3 หญิง 39.7 แพทย์ส่วนใหญ่มีอายุเฉลี่ย 40.9 ปี อายุเฉลี่ยแพทย์ชาย 43.9 ปี อายุเฉลี่ยแพทย์หญิง 37.7 ปี แพทย์ส่วนใหญ่มีความพึงพอใจมากต่อวิชาชีพแพทย์ ร้อยละ 60.2 พึงพอใจปานกลางร้อยละ 37.2 และพึงพอใจน้อยร้อยละ 2.6 ปัจจัยที่มีความสัมพันธ์ที่มีอิทธิพลต่อความพึงพอใจของแพทย์ มี 3 ปัจจัย คือ อายุ การออกกำลังกาย และการ เกิดอุบัติเหตุ คณะผู้วิจัยได้เสนอแนวทางปรับปรุงความพึงพอใจของแพทย์ไว้ด้วย
