



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. Background and Significance of the problem

In today's market, individuals are faced with many different options when deciding on a specific health care provider. Due to the variety of options available, quality service is an essential element that influences this selection process. Thus, a health care organization's reputation for its commitment to quality and patient-centered customer service stands as the main criteria for individuals in choosing a healthcare service provider. Stavins (2006) said that therefore measurement of patient satisfaction and incorporating such results to learn where service is deemed important should be a strategic goal for all healthcare organizations.

Studies of patient's attitude towards health services, health personnel and resources are important to determine whether they meet patient's expectations and needs and to judge patient satisfaction. This information can be used by hospital management to develop improvement programs and to address problems identified by the patients. This will further help provide a detail picture of the patients experience at the hospital from which the hospital management can direct and focus their resources for better service in the future.

None of us are perfect in the work we do at times. When we fail at times, there is no need to blame ourselves or anyone else for the failure. We need to try to understand why we made that mistake so that we do better and improve our services the next time around. Similarly we can learn from patient satisfaction survey to see where the hospital is doing well and where improvements might be needed to better serve patients in future.

Thus the aim of this study would be to attain valuable information from the patients themselves, their “true voice” and to see if their needs were met and how satisfied are they with the various services provided to them at the hospital. Studies of this kind need to be performed more frequently in health services to report how patients being treated are feeling in terms of the services they receive at the hospital during their stay in the hospital [length of stay (LOS)]. There is a need for such studies as this helps the healthcare services provider realize their strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. This will further help in planning and implementing changes and making necessary improvements to health services being provided at the hospital.

Even though there has been quite a few patient satisfaction studies conducted here in Thailand, they are mainly focused on demographic characteristics, type of hospital setting (private, public, profit, non-profit etc) and the method of payment scheme the patients had. There had been no study to date in Thailand where patient satisfaction has been looked into in-terms of length of stay. The average length of stay

in hospital in Thailand ranges from 3.1 days in private for profit hospitals to 8.74 days in public university hospitals. (Tangcharoensatgien et al, 1999)

## 2. Health Status in Thailand

Thailand is a middle-income country in Southeast Asia. The population of Thailand is 62,829,000. Thailand as a nation has been progressing towards development and in the decade that ended in 1995, the Thai economy was one of the world's fastest growing economies at an average rate of 8 to 9 percent a year (World Bank, 2007). Thailand is also recognized for its traditional herbal and medical massages, spas and holistic treatments. Together with the modern medical technology, internationally experienced and trained doctors and good infrastructure for healthcare, patients in Thailand have choices from traditional to ultra modern medical technology.

After the Asian Crisis which affected Thailand and more South Asian nations following 1997, the Thai economy has yet again bounced back on track and on the process of a better future. As stated by the World Bank (2007) Thailand's growth averaged at 5.6 percent from the year 2002 to 2006. The nation's growth has generated variety of development infrastructure which has yield higher income and better access to health care for the Thai people. More than 97 percent of the populations in Thailand, both in the urban and rural areas now have access to clean water and sanitation (World Bank, 2007). Thailand has been taken as an example in the international arena for there effective response against HIV/AIDS by introducing program such as "100% condom use" since the mid 1990s (UNAIDS, 2000). Most

people in Thailand have access to health care, especially since the implementation of the low cost (30 baht scheme) universal services scheme (April 2002), which has as of November 2006 become free of charge (United Nation Development Program [UNDP], 2007).

Table 1: Thailand Health Outcomes  
(WHO – Country health profile)

OUTCOMES	Data	Year Published
Life expectancy at birth (years):		
	Male:69.5	2008*
	Female:76.3	
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	15.2	2008*
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	20.4	2007
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	14	2003

\*Institute for population and social research, Mahidol University

### 3. Present Health Care System in Thailand

Health care in Thailand is organized and provided by public and private sectors. The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) is the main agency responsible for promoting, supporting, controlling and coordinating all health service activities for the well-being of the Thai people. In addition, there are several other agencies playing significant role in medical and health development programs in Thailand such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Bangkok Metropolitan and private sector. These agencies have health facilities including hospitals that provide primary,

secondary and tertiary medical services to the people of Thailand. [Health Policy in Thailand (2006)].

Table 2: Thailand Health Facilities  
(WHO – Country health profile)

Facilities	Data	Year Published
Number of hospital beds	134,453	2002
Population per hospital bed	465	2002
Hospital beds per 10,000 population	22	2002
Number of health centres	69,331	2002

Table 3: Thailand Health Human Resources  
(WHO – Country health profile)

Human resources	Data	Year Published
Number of physicians	18,987	2002
Population per physician	3,295	2002
Physicians per 10,000 population	2.8	2002
Nurses per 10,000 population: Professional nurses	13.7	2002

#### 4. Health Care Finance in Thailand

The health care system in Thailand is a mixed system of public and private for both health care financing and in terms of providing health services. The overall resources that have been allocated for health system has been gradually increasing in

the years. In year 2003 the total expenditure on health care was at 3.3% of GDP which has increased to 3.5% in year 2004. The total health expenditure in Thailand is covered by the public (61.6%) compared to the private (38.4%) (Health Policy in Thailand, 2006).

## 5. Rationale of the Research

The following are the rationales of my research:

- 5.1 Identify difference in patient satisfaction with length of stay (LOS)
- 5.2 Identify difference in patient satisfaction with the services offered to the patient at the hospital
- 5.3 Identify difference in patient satisfaction with general services that were available to the patient at the hospital

## 6. Research Objective

There is a rise in interest of assessing patient satisfaction with health services all around the world. My research will be performed in a hospital setting for the primary purpose of identifying specific patient satisfaction items by different length of stay (LOS) at the hospital.

This valuable information can provide further data to improve overall satisfaction of patients in terms of length of stay, service deliveries and the quality of health care provided during the time of hospitalization.

## 7. Conceptual framework for the study

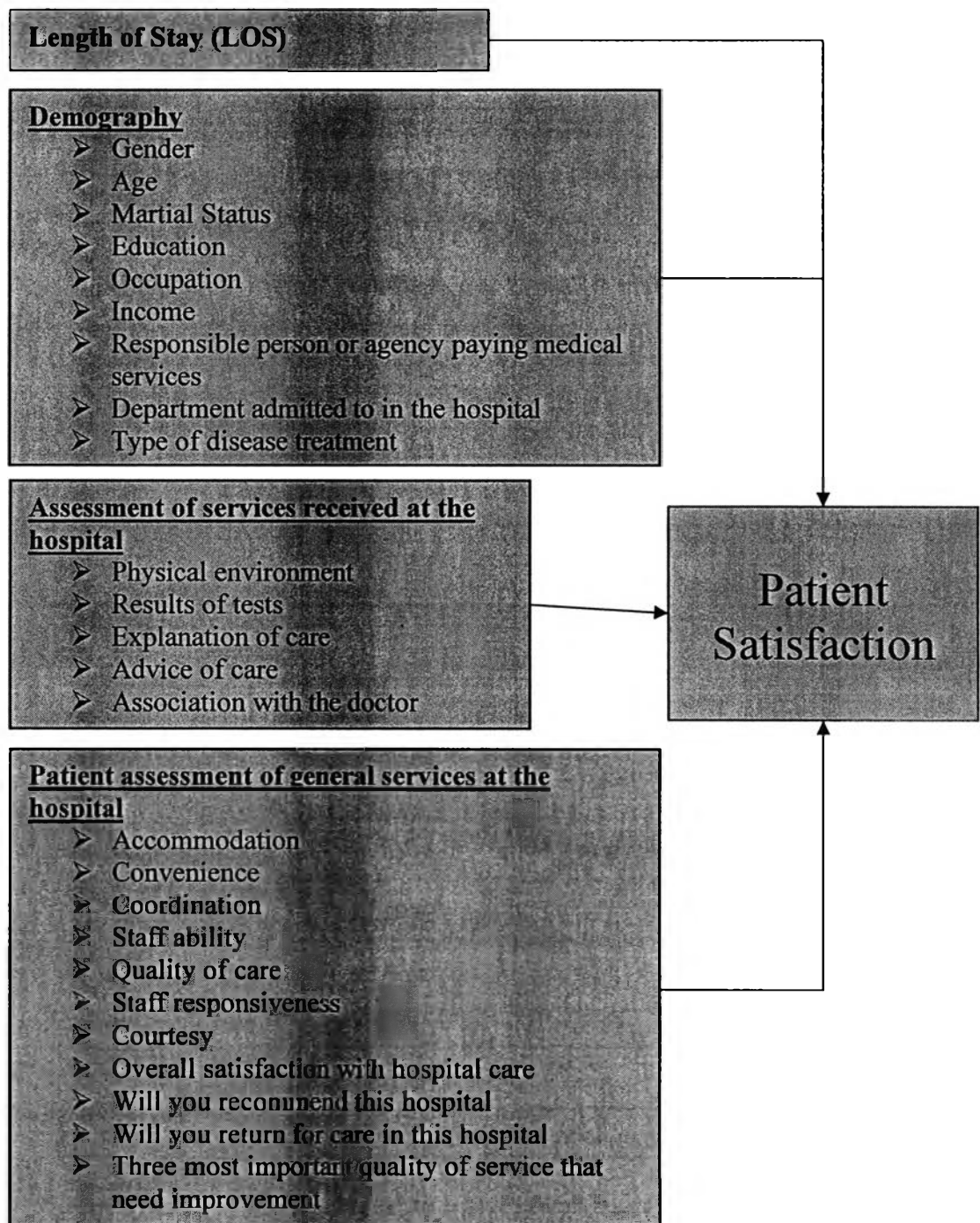


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

**Independent variables:**

- Length of stay
- Demography
- Assessment of services offered at the hospital

**Dependent variables:**

- Patient Satisfaction