Triage systems in Greece: similarities and differences

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INTRODUCTION

Although a systematic method of triage at Accident and Emergencies (A&Es) is in operation in many of the developed countries, there is currently no formal triage system in use in Greece, where due to economic cuts, hospitals run a 24-hour emergency system on a rota basis where at least 2 major hospitals are selected for the evening emergency duty.

AIMS The main aim of this study was to compare triage systems within the northern city of Greece, Thessaloniki (pop 1.5m), and to identify good practices.

METHODS

This was an observational study, where researchers visited the A&E departments of the city’s eight hospitals. A novice checklist was used to record observations regarding triage method, staffing levels, infrastructure, hygiene and safety measures. Data were entered in SPSS v17. Descriptive statistics and the χ² test was used to compare categorical data, while the student’s t test was used for continuous variables at the p≤0.05 value of significance.

RESULTS:

The outcomes measured in this study were the triage mode, waiting times and facilities within A&Es. Only one hospital had a specific triage system in place (Manchester Triage System). Five hospitals used a mixed doctor and/or nurse system on admitting the patient to the A&E dept. based on a simple patient queuing system without a solid method of prioritizing patient’s needs. Three of the smallest hospitals issued numerical places for patients without a health care professional’s input.

DISCUSSION:

Ensuring sound patient allocation system in order to reduce waiting times for critically ill patients in A&Es is the most important reason for introducing a valid triage system in contemporary Greek health care system.

CONCLUSION The implementation of standardized triage system is inadequately implemented at present in Northern Greece and this should be a top priority policy concern.

REFERENCES