



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Background and Significance of Problem

According to the health revolution under the 8<sup>th</sup> National Plan of Health of Thailand, it was emphasized on the improvement of quality in health care services and health system administration, whereas the current 9<sup>th</sup> Nation Plan of Health (2002–2006) emphasizes on health insurance. All Thai people have a privilege to select a hospital for health care. Kantang hospital has continuously performed under this plan. The purpose of services for all people in holistic care was set in 2 aspects. First, it expresses on health system development to change the health problems and health system by a combination of local social-economics, culture, social value and behavior, and environment. Second, it is focused on health development including health promotion, prevention of diseases and self-care by family support, while developing factors promoting environment, health services system, information technology and environment administration system to support a good health care. There are two strategies of the health plan, the financial mechanism and the revolution of health system. The development of system in government health services is to be more standardized. Providers have to be customer-friendly and willing to give services. The customers should have convenience to get services and satisfaction toward services too.

Now, the health insurance policy is successful, and all people have a suitable health insurance. They got the details of policy by multimedia such as government's announcements via television, radio and advertisements. This information makes them enthusiastic to get health services that they expected. This is an important purpose for both private hospital and the government hospital, and they must compete to provide services toward the customers' need and satisfaction. But now, the customers cannot select the hospital themselves because the services in health remain to be provided by professional providers only. The health services system is complex and difficult to understand by ordinary people. Thus, people have not participated in design and control of health services system. (Sirikamolsathien, 1999). In this situation, the problem remains, as the customers do not get the quality of services they expected. There are many problems and the customers suffer from using health services at hospitals.

Sawangdee and et al (1999) studied how customers suffered when they used services at hospital. At Outpatient department, they suffered from the services delay, worrying about their serious symptoms, and equipment was not clean, the courtesy of staff impolite, patients overloaded and had to pay more for treatment. For payment, they do not have to worry now because the government's policy of health insurance for all helps people pays less. At Inpatient department, customers suffered from health care provision at ward, such as doctors and nurses are not adequate to take care, the staff has not expertise and/or missing. Sometimes they suffered from repeated examinations without good reason or no explanation of what was wrong. These made the customers dissatisfied with health services provided.

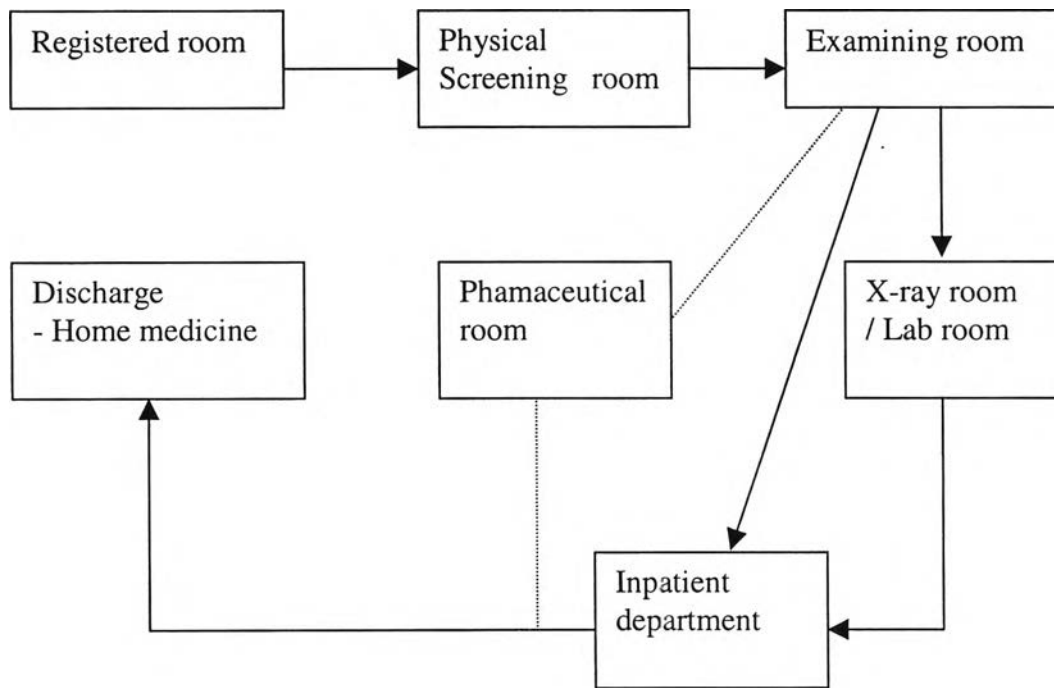
Currently, we found that many customers sue the health services from dissatisfaction and these are reported via various media such as newspapers, radio and others. Tendency of suing will increase if these problems are not solved. It is essential that the providers give the customers an opportunity to participate in health services provision. The staff has to build up the customers' confidence in health services, and do self-assessment to know where they are now and where they want to go. One of the methods to assess this is the customers' complaint. Kantang hospital plans to go to hospital accreditation recently. What is more important is assessing satisfaction, problems and suggestions from the customers once a year at least. And improve on it.

Kantang hospital is a community hospital of 60 beds, 24 kilometers away from Trang city hall. In the year 2000, 79,388 customers (93.20%) with 120,481 visits were Outpatient department (OPD) cases, and 5,790 cases (6.79%) were Inpatient department (IPD) cases. In 2002, it was decreased to 26,457 OPD cases with 117,987 visits. Because this hospital was performing on the all health insurance policy, a number of people went to other hospitals nearby and which were more convenient to go. There was also an overlap of identity cards of migrant labor customers. But, for IPD cases there was still an increasing trend. In year 2000 – 2002, the customers were 5,790, 5,983, and 7,283 including migrant labor. The researcher excludes migrant labor because it is difficult to communicate. Although there is an increase in customers the doctors and nurses are not increased. It affected the health care services, for example, patients received health education only when the staff has time to do so.

Inpatient department (IPD) of Kantang hospital is divided into 3 wards; female ward, male ward and postpartum ward. The researcher works at male ward and involves with other two wards too. Thus, the researcher can see the problems in all the wards from observation and talking with both patients and nurses. There are an average of 2 – 3 cases of suits in the opinion box. After performing under the all insurance policy, we found that IPD patients were dissatisfied with the attitude of health staff, and the services being not enough, etc. In addition, Kantang hospital is trying to improve the services for hospital accreditation. In the researcher's view, this hospital should focus on improving service quality until the customers are satisfied, and provide adequate services that the customers need. The survey opinion of customers is a method to assess service availability and customers' need. Only after that they should try to improve for getting hospital accreditation.

The patients' opinion of Inpatient department will cover all functions of services from registration room, physical screening room, doctor examining room, X-ray room or laboratory room to IPD until they are discharged, as shown in the figure.

**Figure 1: Shown process of service of Kantang hospital at IPD.**



From this figure, whenever the doctor orders to admit, patient receives a prescription and is sent to the pharmaceutical room for medicine. Some patients have X-ray or laboratory investigation, which they receive at X-ray room or Laboratory room. Then they go to ward and stay there until they are discharged and they get the home-medicine.

## 2. Research Question

1. What is the level of customer satisfaction toward service of Kantang hospital?
2. What is the association between accessibility of the customer, quality perception and satisfaction?

3. How is a different socio-demographic characteristic affect the customer's satisfaction?

### **3. The Objective of Research**

#### **3.1 General objective**

To assess customer's satisfaction toward service of Kantang hospital.

#### **3.2 Specific objective**

1. To measure the level of satisfaction toward service of Kantang hospital.
2. To measure the relationships between accessibility of the customer, quality of service on customer perception, and satisfaction.
3. To describe effects of socio-demographic factors of participants on satisfaction.

### **4. Research Hypothesis**

1. The customer satisfaction toward service is currently at moderate.
2. The customer perception of quality of service and accessibility to service are related to customer satisfaction.
3. The demographic factors of participants have effects on the customers' satisfaction.

## **5. The Variables of Research**

### **5.1 Independent variables**

1. Accessibility:
  - Availability
  - Accessibility
  - Accommodation
  - Acceptability
2. Quality Dimension:
  - Physical environment
  - Technical skill
  - Art of care
  - Continuity of service
  - Explanation of care
  - Outcome of care

### **5.2 Dependent variables**

1. Convenience
2. Co-ordination
3. Courtesy
4. Medical information
5. Quality of care

## **6. Terminological and Operation Definitions**

Throughout this paper, the following terminology and operational definitions are used for specific variables. The first definition is for the terminology that is in general and the second one is operational definitions for independent and dependent variables.

### **1. Terminological Definitions**

- 1.1 OPD refers to the Outpatient Department at Kantang hospital.
- 1.2 IPD refers to the Inpatient Department at Kantang hospital. There are three wards: Female ward, Male ward and Postpartum ward in this study.
- 1.3 Customer refers to male and female patients or their relatives and caretakers who assist them while visiting to IPD, they must be aged 15 and above.
- 1.4 Signs describe the characteristics of the illness that can be observed by others.
- 1.5 Symptoms mean subjective interpretation of experiences and may not be directly observed.

### **2. Operational Definitions**

This operational definitions specify how to measure a variable in the field of customer perception in quality of care and their satisfaction.



### **2.1 Accessibility of the customer to service**

This refers to the customer's options to access the services: and availability, accessibility, accommodation and acceptability were measured by using the nominal scale questionnaire.

### **2.2 Perception of the customer about quality of health care services**

This refers to the customer's options towards the health care staff and services as related to six aspects; physical environment, technical skill, art of care, explanation of care, continuity of service and outcome of care. The outlook was measured by using ordinal nominal scale questionnaire.

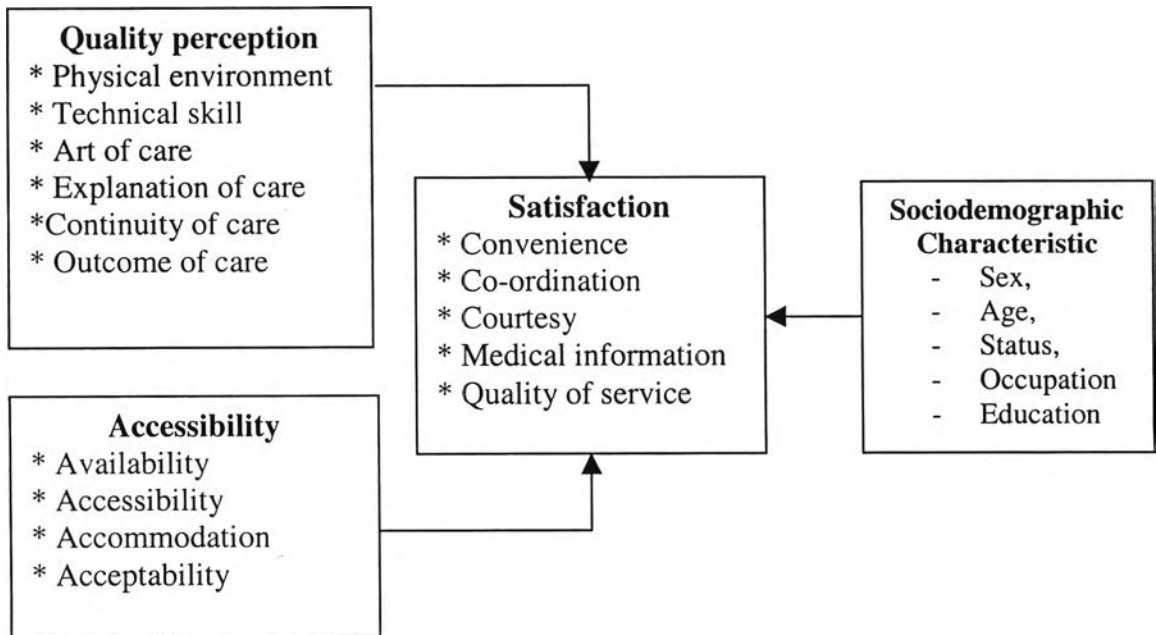
### **2.3 Customer Satisfaction**

This refers to positive feelings towards the quality of health care services in meeting the customer's expectations: convenience, co-ordination of service, courtesy, medical information received and quality of care. The customer's satisfaction was measured by using the ordinal scale questionnaire.

## **7. Conceptual Framework in This Study**

The variables studied, independent and dependent variables were included in figure 2

**Figure 2: Conceptual framework**



Independent variables: Socio-demographics, Quality perception and

Accessibility  
Dependent variables: Satisfaction