



Factors affecting social work services in Trung Vuong hospital in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract

Since social work was officially recognized as a profession under Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg of the Government, social work profession has been contributing to ensuring social security in general and in other fields in particular. In the health sector, currently, most of the hospitals at the district level and above have established social work departments/division in the hospital. At the hospital, social workers play an important role in improving the quality of medical examination and treatment through the provision of social work services. However, due to some limitations, the service delivery is still not as expected. This article aims to evaluate the factors affecting the effectiveness of social work services at Trung Vuong hospital in Ho Chi Minh City to improve the efficiency of social work services. The results show that the factors belonging to the group of social work staff, the hospital as well as the law and policy have certain influences on the effectiveness of social work services at Trung Vuong hospital.

Keywords: Social work service, hospital, patient, social worker in hospital

1. Introduction

The more developed society, the more it needs the services of social work. The presence of social workers in health care in the community is a way to expand the health care network to people everywhere, at all times, in order to encourage them to actively participate in solving health problems by their own ability with appropriate methods (Tran Thi Tran Chau, 2016) ^[9]. Social work services at the hospital are even more necessary and it is the factor that needs to be promoted the most to meet people's demands. The support of social workers has increased the satisfaction of patients and their families when coming to the hospital for treatment. According to statistics from the Ministry of Health (2018), in 12769 health facilities currently, 80% of villages have medical staff operating, 100% of communes have health stations, of which nearly 2/3 of communes have health stations. In addition, the legal system and health policies have been promulgated and gradually improved in practice; scientific and technical advances in health are increasingly developed; medical facilities are increasingly improved; the care of the community including humanitarian and charity activities has been promoted thus actively support people and disadvantaged people in society to overcome the risks encountered in the process of medical examination and treatment and health care (Vu Thi Minh Hanh, 2013) ^[11].

Social work in general and social work in hospitals in particular are increasingly affirming the role and value of the profession, especially in the medical field. During Covid 19, the whole world is struggling to cope with the pandemic, accompanying the front lines to fight the epidemic at hospitals and the role of social work is very important (Ta Thi Thanh Thuy, 2020) ^[8]. And the social work department of Trung Vuong hospital is no exception. Trung Vuong Hospital is one of the first-class hospitals in Ho Chi Minh City that has established a Social Work Department with the above roles. And when the Covid 19 epidemic complicatedly developed, the hospital converted its function into a Covid-19 treatment hospital, the hospital's social work department also promoted its role. However, looking at it from many different aspects and when the Covid-19 epidemic subsides and hospitals return to normal operation, the hospital social work department still has roles that have not been fully promoted in providing patient support services medical examination and treatment.

This article is excerpted from the author's research "Social Work Services in Supporting Patients at Trung Vuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City" to find out and evaluate the current situation of factors affecting social work services in supporting patients at Trung Vuong hospital, thereby proposing suggestions to improve the quality of social work services in the hospital.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Documentary research methods

The research team studied and analyzed documents related to the previous research content to investigate and clarify the research history, the theoretical basis of the topic to understand social work services in the field of social work in supporting patients at Trung Vuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. Based on that, it proposes some solutions to improve the effectiveness of social work services in supporting patients at Trung Vuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. Bright. The research team used the method of document analysis to collect and update concepts and theories related to the topic, learn about the characteristics of the study area, and a brief overview of the status of social work services in hospital to support patients. Analyze related topics with scientific information sources and solutions to improve the effectiveness of social work service activities.

2.2. Questionnaire survey method

The research team used the questionnaire survey method to collect quantitative information for the research topic. Specifically, to assess the status of using social work services as well as factors affecting service delivery in the hospital. The research team based on the research objective, the researcher determines what information to collect, identifies the survey subjects and the characteristics of the situation at the place where conducting the survey; Drafting a toolkit for information gathering; Conduct opinion polls, distribute questionnaires for respondents to fill out.

(1) Building a survey based on relevant documents, opinions of patients and social workers, ensuring the survey meets the requirements.

- Conduct a trial survey of 12 questionnaires.
- Edit and complete the questionnaire.
- Distributing questionnaires, collecting information related to research problems.
- Check completed questionnaires, input data and process information.

(2) Select survey sample: In March 2022, according to the statistics of Trung Vuong Hospital, a day the hospital has about 1,200 - 1,500 patients coming for examination. Sample

selection n was 130 patients, with N = 1,200 and allowable error of 10%, confidence level 95%, and P = 0.5.

In addition, when implementing this method, the research team also ensures principles such as: Choosing the right time and space, strictly complying with the rules and regulations of the study area and ensuring confidentiality.

2.3. In-depth interview method

The research team used the in-depth interview method to have deep understanding about factors affecting the patient support process at Trung Vuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. After the patient has had a preliminary assessment of social work services in patient support at Trung Vuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, the the study will conduct a deep interview to find out more about research areas. The research team went directly to Trung Vuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City to interview 9 subjects related to the research topic.

Selection of a sample of 9 people for in-depth interviews including the Hospital's Board of Directors, the Leaders of the Social Work Department, and the social work staff, employees in the social work network (Doctors, Nurses, Nurses...).

Table 1: Number of in-depth interviews by target group

No	Subjects of interview	Quantity
1	Leader of Trung Vuong Hospital	01
2	Leaders of Social Work Department	01
3	Social workers	03
4	Employees in the social work network	01
5	Patients in the hospital	03
	Total	09

Source: Actual survey data of the project in July, 2022

3. Situation of factors affecting social work services at Trung Vuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City

According to the survey results, the level of affecting factors on the activities of social work services at the Trung Vuong Hospital has an overall average score of 4.1. Thus, in general, the patients who have been receiving medical examination and treatment at the hospital who have used social work services believe that these factors all have certain effects on social work services. Specifically, according to the hierarchy, the number of selected patients shows that the most influential factor is "Patient needs are high and complicated", the second is "Knowledge and skills of the hospital's social work staff are limited". The third is "Number of social work staff is not enough", the fourth is "The patient does not know about social work services in the hospital" and finally, "Regulations, laws and policies are incomplete".

Table 2: Factors affecting social work services at Trung Vuong hospital according to patients' opinions

No	Affecting factors	No Affect		Little Affect		Normal		Affect		Very Affect		Total	Mean	Order
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	Patient did not know about social work services in hospital	0	0	3	2,3	23	17,7	95	73,1	9	6,9	130	3,85	4
2	Patient needs are high and complicated	0	0	5	3,8	10	7,7	20	15,4	95	73,1	130	4,58	1
3	Regulations, laws and policies are incomplete	0	0	21	16,2	18	13,8	79	60,8	12	60,8	130	3,63	5
4	Knowledge and skills of the hospital's social work staff are limited	0	0	0	0	19	14,6	51	39,2	60	46,2	130	4,32	2
5	Number of social work staff is not enough	0	0	0	0	8	6,2	104	80,0	18	13,8	130	4,08	3
	Overall point												4,1	

Source: Actual survey data of the project in July 2022

3.1. Group of factors belonging to social workers

The group of factors belonging to social workers include "Knowledge and skills of the hospital's medical staff, social work staff are limited" and "Number of social work staff is not enough". In which, "Knowledge and skills of the hospital's social work staff are limited," the overall average score is 4.32 at the level of very influential, ranked 2/5. It can be said that social work in the hospital is a new field for hospitals, so the implementation of social work services in hospitals is still difficult and the social work staff only trained and fostered knowledge on social work, there are no social workers who have been trained in social work, especially those who do social work in the social work network of the hospital. Mainly nurses and nurses). The factor "Number of social work staff is not enough" has an overall average score of 4.08 at the level of very influential, ranked 3/5. *"I see that the social work department in hospitals is only set up with a few employees, if it does the same as the function of the social work department that I have learned, how can a few employees be enough. Not to mention the hospital is full of elderly people to visit, the activity of assisting patients to move in one morning is full of people, who sits to guide, and who does other things. Not to mention that the hospital is large, the elderly can see the map not well, I think at least the place to move between the two faculties should have someone in charge of guidance..."* (Depth-interview, Male, 43 years old, Patient).

Through the survey, it can be seen that the professional qualifications and capacity of social workers at Trung Vuong hospital have a direct impact on the effectiveness of implementation of social work services in the hospital. Social workers are trained formally, or they are trained in social work training courses of class III and IV, they will have many advantages in their work. At the same time, they also have advanced and experienced knowledge to handle the tasks assigned by the leader. However, at present, the Social Work Department of Trung Vuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City still has several social work staff who have not been formally trained in social work skills, knowledge. Therefore, the effectiveness of social work activities at the hospital is not high, thus it is necessary to have solutions to overcome the limitations.

Social worker is an essential factor to effectively implement the hospital's social work services for patients and their family members. *"Any job that wants to be successful must be responsible, enthusiastic, and demanding attitude at work. To perform well the role of social workers in the implementation of hospital social work services, the most important stage is the implementation of support services. Deploying social work services of the hospital needs to propagate and explain to patients and patients' families about the services that the social work team is implementing and connecting in the hospital. If they understand it, then they can do it well. With skills and experience, social workers apply to connect support resources for patients during medical examination and treatment at the hospital. With my subjective opinion, I think that skills and work experience are very important factors to be able to perform social work services at the hospital because if social workers are fully equipped with specialized knowledge about social work and general medical knowledge will do well in their duties as social workers at hospitals. At the same time, they will do well as an effective linker of support resources for patients such as receiving medical treatment. strengthen myself, overcome*

all difficulties in the treatment of illness" (Female, 30 years old, social worker). Through sharing from social workers, it shows that they have a good awareness of the role of a social worker in performing social work connection services at Trung Vuong hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. This is one of the favorable factors for providing good social work services. However, besides the positive factors, there are still some limitations affecting social work services at the hospital such as the current number of patients at Trung Vuong hospital is overcrowding, leading to overload in medical examination and providing social work services. At Trung Vuong Hospital, the social work department currently has only 07 people, the number of social work staff is small, the workload is high, leading to a decrease in the enthusiasm and passion for work of the social work staff at the hospital. *"Every day we have to receive and instruct hundreds of patients at a time, each clinic only assigns one social worker to perform the task, thus leading to overload and much pressure in work, However, many patients who have to wait for a long time have a disgruntled attitude towards social workers, often feel depressed at work, and their love for the job declines due to the impact of many surrounding factors"* (Male, 38 years old, social worker). Thereby, love for the job, passion and interest in the job has a significant impact on the quality of work. To work effectively, it is necessary to have a love for the job, a spirit of enthusiasm in work, the new work efficiency will be highly effective.

Besides, the factor of capacity of social workers at the hospital is a factor that has a significant impact on the effectiveness of providing social work services at Trung Vuong hospital. *"I have been a staff member of the social work department at Trung Vuong hospital for 3 years. I am a well-trained staff in the social work profession, however, beside social work understanding, social workers must also have basic knowledge of medicine to do counseling, guiding or other services for patients. In fact, at the Department of Social Work we have people well trained in social work and others have medical experience. But it is not enough as analyzing above. In recent years certain results have been achieved, but there are still many limitations that need to be overcome in the area of providing social work service"* (Female, 45 years old, social worker).

In order to have a team of professional social workers, universities in the health sector need also provide social work training to ensure that the source of social workers is capable enough to meet the needs of the community and in hospital. Currently, although there are more than 50 universities offering bachelor's degrees in social work, there is only 1 university having meidal orientation in the social work curriculum. Therefore, to ensure Knowledge and skills of the medical staff, social workers at the hospital, we need to have detail plan to develop social work curriculum in health sector. At the same time, short training courses in this area also need to be focused and developed.

3.2. The group of factors belonging to the patient

The group of factors belonging to the patient includes two factors "The patient does not know about social work services in supporting the patient" and the factor "Patient needs are high and complicated". According to the survey results, the factor "Patient needs are high and complicated" has an average score of 4.58 at the very influential level and ranks the first among five factors. From the above data, the patient thinks that: Patient's needs are the most important factor

affecting social work service activities at the hospital. The reason why patients choose the factor "Patient needs are high and complicated" is the most influential factor because most patients think that this is a service to serve patients, meeting the patient's needs is the most important factor. *"I feel that if this is a service to support patients coming to medical examination and treatment. The hospital needs to know what the needs of the patient want to support, for example, the elderly needs a guide to walk, wheelchairs, the poor need to be guided. need money, homeless people need a place to stay after being discharged from the hospital.... They should know the exact needs of the patient, then they should arrange personnel to support. If it needs a lot of money, they should call for sponsors."* (Male, 48 years old, Patient).

Patients who choose the factor "patients do not know social work services in supporting patients" have an overall average score of 3.85 and rank 4/5. It is because, when coming to the clinic and treatment at the hospital, the patient only cares about his own health status, but has not paid attention to social work services in supporting the patient. The social work profession has been developed for a long time in the world, but in Vietnam, the social work profession has only really developed in recent years, so the role of social workers is still quite new. Social work in the hospital is an activity aimed at supporting, caring, encouraging, and sharing the problems that patients are facing. The survey results also show that patients' awareness of social work services in hospitals is still very limited and narrow in thinking that is the responsibility of the hospital in performing its functions and duties with the patient. This led to patients not fully understanding the meaning, roles and responsibilities of social workers, thus leading to the fact that the majority of patients currently do not have full access to services. Even when we have resources, the patients do not recognize what to connect with. This leads to patients and their families not grasping the benefits they deserve. With connected programs, sometimes they don't take full advantage of it. They do not really care about the benefits they receive and sometimes even have the mentality of not needing and not wanting to access the hospital's social work services. Therefore, it is necessary to have solutions to change the minds of patients when using hospital services so that they can access support resources. To do that, it takes a lot of effort from the hospital's leadership, the team of social workers, and the hospital's doctors in disseminating social work services at the hospital. Thus, patients could understand more about social work and the benefits that social work services bring to them.

3.3. The group of factors belonging to regulations, laws and policies

The assessment of the social work staff at the hospital on this factor has an average score of 3.63 and ranks 5/5. The group of policy and legal factors mentioned by hospital staff and leaders believes that they greatly affect the implementation of social work services at Trung Vuong Hospital, Ho Chi Minh City. Recognizing the importance of social work at Trung Vuong hospital, it has been several documents regulating the function of social work and duties for social workers at the hospital. It has created a legal corridor for social workers at the hospital. However, the social work profession is a new profession in Vietnam, however, the legal corridor in the issuance of legal documents and mechanisms and policies for social workers at the hospital is still limited. As a result, there are many limitations to ensuring benefits for

social workers at the hospital. At Trung Vuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, no legal framework has been developed to protect social workers. It can be said that social workers began to be formalized in the health sector. However, with the specialized professional characteristics such as the field of social work, it is necessary to have a solid legal framework as well as the current standards of social work practice in the hospital.

Society has not been given proper attention, there is no professional title on social work in the health sector and hospital. Policies for social workers in hospital are also not enough to encourage and ensure providing social work services effectively. *"After many years of operation, each member of the social work team has become a bridge between patients and medical staff, actively mobilizing society to join hands to contribute to alleviating the pain of illness, bringing joy and happiness. Happy, helping patients' families reduce difficulties. However, because there is no regulation on functions and tasks for social work groups, there is no policy for staff doing this work. There is a shortage of manpower in social work, only 5 staff, and they have not been trained in social work. Even as a manager, I have not been able to attend a course on social work"* (Female, 45 years old, Leadership). Thus, when the functions, tasks and roles of social workers have not been specified by legal documents, it is very difficult in the management of leaders and staff of the Social Work Department at hospital. Thus, for social work to be applied to the actual situation at Trung Vuong hospital and providing effective services for patients, it is necessary to have specific legal policies and regulations on the responsibilities and duties of social workers.

4. Recommendations of study

On the inter-ministerial site (including the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health...)

- It is necessary to clearly define the social work vocational training program in the hospital and the management mechanism with inter-ministerial coordination: The Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health.
- Develop and complete a set of professional ethical standards for social workers in hospitals.
- Although the circulars, decrees and regulations have clearly indicated the functions, tasks, and codes of the industry, there are no specific regulations on human resources who must have a major in social work. So, the fact that students graduate from social work is still difficult in being admitted to the hospital. Therefore, the hospital lacks trained human resources from social work majors.
- The working regime of social workers has not been regulated like medical staff, in terms of barcodes of social workers like normal administrative staff, while social workers always in contact with patients, there should be regulations on the level of toxicity of social workers. There should be appropriate and clear policies for social workers in the health sector.

On the hospital site

- Based on legal documents, each hospital, based on its own characteristics, also needs to develop specific regulations, create a legal corridor for social work staff to implement activities as well as coordinate related

activities. Industry with other departments to further improve patient care efficiency.

- Hospitals, medical examination and treatment facilities need to have proper assessment of the role of social workers, thereby making appropriate regulations and development directions to improve the quality of hospital services and patient satisfaction in medical examination and treatment.
- It is necessary to create conditions for students majoring in social work to practice at the hospital. Leaders as well as staff should clearly define that guiding students to practice is also a way to improve the capacity of social work staff in the hospital through the process of student supervision.
- It is necessary to communicate with patients and patients' family members as well as medical staff to better understand the duties and roles of social workers in the hospital.
- In each hospital, each department needs a social worker, to reduce the pressure on medical staff. Help students of social work when practicing, practice is communicated and learn from these social workers and they will be supervisors when students practice, practice at the hospital.
- Recruiting personnel with knowledge and expertise in social work in the hospital, to promote their professional roles and tasks and better serve patients.

On the social workers site

- Social worker need to learn the field of social work in health, approach practice, practice at hospitals, medical facilities before entering the profession.
- Apply knowledge, skills and methods of individual social work, group social work, and learned knowledge, tools, and techniques into practice.
- Adhere to professional ethics during practice, internship, and work.
- Comply with the rules and regulations and always try and complete the work assigned by the agency.
- Actively learn from experience and improve their knowledge and professional skills in the field of social work in general and social work in hospitals in particular.
- Social workers also need to change their approach, proactively approach patients to understand their needs as well as offer more effective services for patients.

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