

INFORMATION NOTE

Demand for Accident and Emergency Services During Public Holidays

Demand in 1992-96

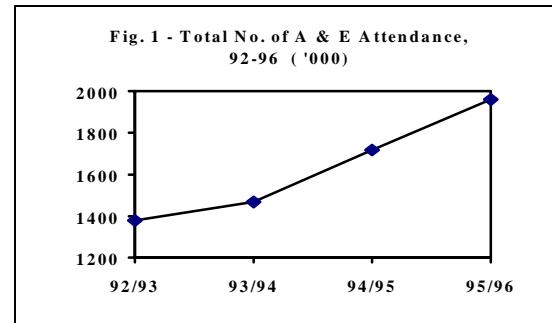
1. There are 14 public hospitals¹ in Hong Kong offering free Accident and Emergency² (A & E) all the year round. Table 1 and Figure 1 show that the demand for A & E services has been growing in the past five years.

Table 1: Total A&E Attendance 1992 - 1996

	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96
Total No. of A & E attendance	1,378,181	1,466,482	1,716,559	1,960,001
Change in % over the previous year	n.a.	6.41%	17.05%	14.18%

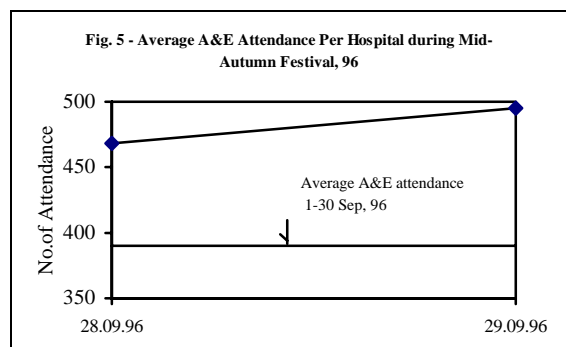
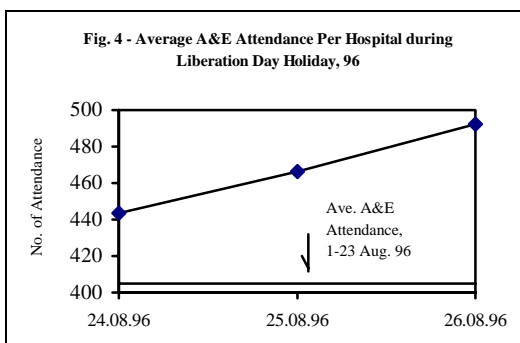
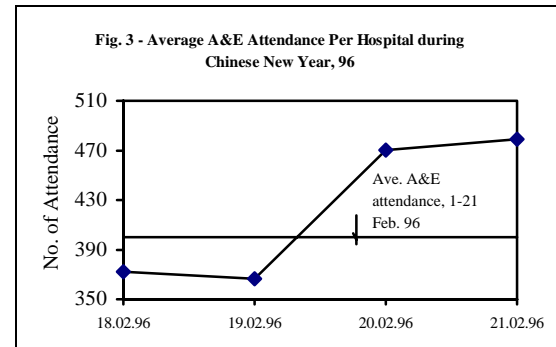
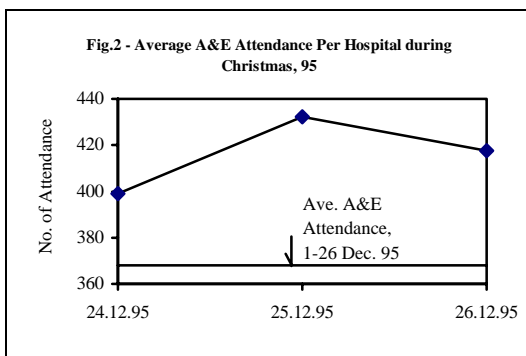
n.a. = not available

Source of Table 1 and Fig. 1 : Hospital Authority



Demand During Public Holidays

2. During public or extended holidays, the number of A & E attendance is higher. Figs. 2 to 5 show the average number of A & E attendance per hospital during different public holidays and normal periods. The figures illustrate that on average, A & E attendance during public holidays is 13% higher than that of a normal day.



Source of Figs. 2-5: Hospital Authority

Effect of Charges

¹ The Hong Kong Eye Hospital also has Accident and Emergency Services but the services are confined to eye emergencies only so its service usage is disregarded throughout this fact sheet.
² There is an additional public hospital, the United Christian Hospital, which charges \$37 per patient who seeks A & E treatment.

3. There is no evidence to show that charges on A & E services will affect the demand. Table 2 shows the % increase of the number of A & E attendance of different hospitals during different holidays over normal days. The findings show that the increase of A & E attendance ranged from 7.5-21%. Although the UCH charges \$37 per A & E treatment, its average increase during the holidays over the normal days is found to be within the range. Therefore, it fails to conclude that the charges of \$37 will affect the demand for A & E services.

Table 2: % Increase of Number of A & E Attendance of Different Hospitals During Different Holidays Over Normal Days

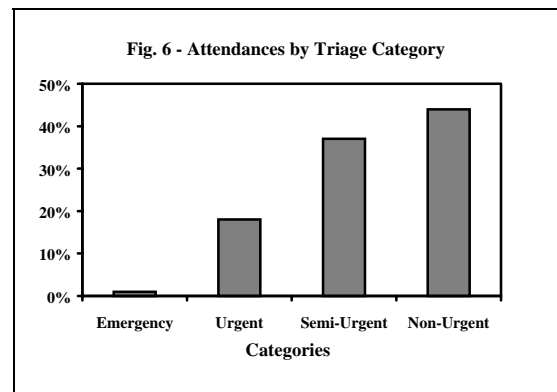
	UCH	CMC	FLH	PWH	PYN	QEH	TSK
Easter, 95	35%	30%	18%	18%	21%	11%	24%
Christmas, 95	13%	13%	22%	14%	14%	0%	9%
New Year, 96	2%	13%	11%	10%	8%	5%	12%
Lunar New Year, 96	9%	-0.4%	17%	5%	15%	2%	-10%
Easter, 96	14%	31%	25%	16%	30%	17%	14%
Liberation Day, 96	12%	16%	35%	10%	19%	10%	18%
Average Increase	14%	17.1%	21%	12%	18%	7.5%	11%

Remarks: UCH = United Christian Hospital, CMC = Caritas Medical Center, FLH = Fanling Hospital, PWH = Prince of Wales Hospital, PYN = Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital, QEH = Queen Elizabeth Hospital, TSK = Tang Shiu Kin Hospital

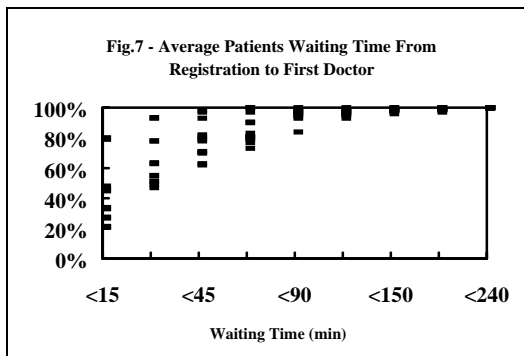
Source: Hospital Authority

Attendances by Triage Category

4. The Hospital Authority classifies A & E attendances into 4 categories, namely, emergency, urgent, semi-urgent and non-urgent. The categorization is determined by a nurse during registration of the patient. Fig. 6 shows that in a 2-week sample survey conducted in 1996, less than 2% attendances belonged to emergencies. Around 20% were urgent cases whereas the majority (over 70%) of A & E attendances were semi-urgent or non-urgent cases.



Source: Hospital Authority



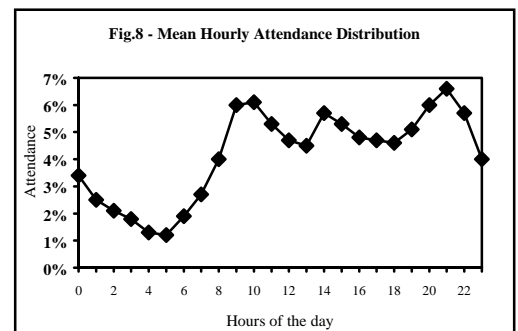
Waiting Time

5. The Hospital Authority in 1993 has adopted a performance target of an average waiting time per A & E attendance to be within 30 minutes. Fig. 7 shows the average waiting time of patients from registration to first doctor in a 2-week sample survey of different hospitals in 1996. It is noted that around 45-92% of patients were seen by first doctor within 30 minutes upon arrival and the longest waiting time was not more than 4 hours.

Source: Hospital Authority

Hourly Attendance Distribution

6. Fig. 8 shows the mean hourly attendance distribution of 8 different A & E hospitals. It can be seen from the figure that there are 3 peaks of A & E attendances during a normal day. The first peak is in the morning from 9-10a.m., the second peak is from 2-4p.m. and the third and also the highest peak is from 8-10p.m.



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