

EDITORIAL

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Time and again we hear cries from various corners in Bahrain that the Salmaniya Medical Centre's (SMC) Accident and Emergency (A/E) Department services are abused by the population of Bahrain. Consequent to this abuse, the patients in acute and sometime life threatening conditions do not get the attention they require, and tragedies strike. To divert patients to local health centres is only part of the solution. Triage by experienced nurses may meet resistance from the public unless one is made fully aware of what triaging is, and what exactly it is for. Educating the public is of course the best solution, but the process must be continuous and intensive. The educators must be fully qualified for the job, have perseverance and persistence. The results of any educational campaign are usually slow to come to fruition. But then the study (Reference: Hamza AAY, Al-Awadhi MA, Al-Arrayed AS. Profile of Attendance in Accident and Emergency Department, Salmaniya Medical Centre) tells us that most of the users are educated, so how "education" will help to decrease the load on SMC A/E Department, the study does not try to answer.

The article in this issue addressing the subject (Reference: Hamza AAY. Analysis of 1612 Patients Admitted to the Burn Unit in Salmaniya Medical Centre, Bahrain from 1984-1991) does not tell us why the SMC A/E doctors contribute to this abuse by unnecessary requests of radiological and laboratory investigations, and equally attending to the patients with chronic problems. Is it possible that the patients have learned that attendance at A/E Department spares them the long waiting lists for radiological and lab investigations; investigations that they have no access to as health centre patients, and that on top of this they get an urgent referral to a specialist within the hospital instead of the 3 months or so *if* (if at all) referred from their local health centre?

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