

**Evaluation of Utilization and Accessibility of Health Services of
the Hôpital Albert Schweitzer, Deschapelles, Haiti –
a Community Based Survey as a Basis for a Proposal on how to
Strengthen Primary Health Care Services**

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Abstract

The present study aimed at assessing accessibility and utilization of the different health services offered by the *Hôpital Albert Schweizer* (HAS) as well as the perceived Primary Health Care (PHC) needs in the district served by HAS. Secondary data available at HAS was collected and analyzed descriptively. The analysis showed a significant increase in the utilization of the hospital services while the utilization of the PHC services remained more or less stable over the last years. The review of former studies about HAS as well as the analysis of current data revealed significant inequities in access to health care services. A survey among hospital doctors about the appropriateness of referrals to the hospital confirmed that a significant number of patients could be treated or followed up at the PHC level instead of at the hospital outpatient clinic. The perceived PHC needs were assessed by 34 focus group interviews with both the health care staff and the population of the district. The overwhelming of the hospital with patients was seen as a major problem by both groups. All upgrading of the PHC services would be welcomed and reduce the need for patients to access the hospital according to the population. The main priorities for the population are better accessibility, expanded emergency services and improved physical infrastructure of the PHC services. The health staff prioritizes interventions to improve training, supervision, availability of drugs, material and professional staff so that patient load from the hospital outpatient clinic could be taken over at the peripheral health facilities. In addition, the need for strengthening community participation, the health information system, and the capacities of the outreach health workers was recognized. A cost analysis showed that a consultation at the hospital outpatient clinic costs about 2 ½ times more than a consultation at a dispensary or health center.

All findings were condensed in a problem analysis which formed the basis for a plan of action presented to the Board of Directors of HAS with the overall goal to provide improved and more cost-effective health care and to reduce inequities in access to health care in the HAS district. The plan of action proposes interventions on the different service levels shifting priorities from a hospital-centered system to a more PHC-focused one.