


## Emergency Department Overcrowding in Türkiye

### Türkiye'de Acil Servislerde Aşırı Kalabalıklık

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To the Editor,

Overcrowding in Emergency Departments (EDs) is a significant concern worldwide. The number of ED visits is increasing, and this problem has become an important public health problem both in Türkiye and in the world. ED overcrowding is associated with many negative consequences, including increased workload, caused staff distress and burnout, decreased satisfaction of ED healthcare staff and patients, delay in treatment of patients most in need of emergency care, decreased quality of care, and increased healthcare cost (1,2).

EDs in Türkiye were visited by approximately 172 million in 2021, which is equal to 2050 visits per 1000 person (1,3). These statistical data show that the use of EDs in Türkiye is more than twice the country's population (Türkiye population is currently 85 million in 2024). The statistical data showed that EDs in Türkiye (2050 visit per 1000 person) are almost 7 times more crowded than EDs in developed countries including United States (433 visits per 1000 person), United Kingdom (300 visits per 1000 person), Australia (312 visits per 1000 person), Belgium (290 visits per 1000 person), and Singapore (180 visits per 1000 person) (1, 3). Türkiye is the country that uses EDs the most in the world compared to the population. This situation is not sustainable in the long term and causes many problems in relation to ED services, ED healthcare staff, and ED patients.

The current literature examined the causes of ED overcrowding. One of the reasons for ED overcrowding is that patients have problems with primary healthcare services such as limited resources and intervention, limited working hours, distrust, dissatisfaction with staff, and perceived inexperienced staff in primary healthcare services (4,5). In addition, current studies have shown that patients have some problems with outpatient clinics, and therefore visit the ED instead. These problems include that unable to get an appointment, unsafe care environment, and lack of interest (3). Another reason for using the ED is the unavailability of healthcare services after working hours, which means ED is the only available service for all patients, even for those with non-urgent conditions (4). Having such limitations with healthcare system contributes to ED overcrowding. In addition, some patients choose to attend the ED due to its advantages such as easy access, availability of resources and tests, being examined quickly, better

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quality of care, and being examined by experienced staff in the ED (4,5).

Solutions for ED overcrowding have been identified in the existing literature (1,6). Solving current problems with the healthcare system could alleviate ED overcrowding. Addressing problems with primary healthcare services, problems with outpatient clinics, and initiating new healthcare services that serve after working hours could reduce ED visits and consequently ED overcrowding (6). In addition, increasing the health literacy of patients and educating them regarding using the appropriate healthcare service for their health needs, for instance, using their general practitioner for their non-urgent conditions, could reduce the number of ED visits. However, it is important to state that ED overcrowding is a multifaceted and complex problem. The solution to this problem is multi-dimensional and requires a holistic approach. The factors that cause ED overcrowding are not independent from each other. Therefore, to reduce ED overcrowding, the factors that cause ED overcrowding should be handled with a holistic approach and solutions should be developed accordingly.

The current situation of EDs in Türkiye is not sustainable due to high volume of patients and the negative consequences of such overcrowding. Therefore, there is an urgent need to address ED overcrowding in Türkiye. There is a need for effective solutions to alleviate ED overcrowding. Appropriate interventions and solutions should be identified. Addressing ED overcrowding requires a system-wide approach. Appropriate stakeholders including the Ministry of Health should act on addressing this significant problem. Alleviating the problem of overcrowding in the ED would increase the quality of care in ED setting, increase the satisfaction of ED healthcare staff and patients, and decrease healthcare cost. In addition, alleviating ED overcrowding will allow the ED to become more functional, reduce the safety risk to patients and staff, and decrease the rate of medical error.

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