

**GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM**

**PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN GHANA: A**

**CASE OF GREATER ACCRA REGIONAL HOSPITAL (GARH)**

**BY**

**BAZING RUTH**

**(MAPR 18081)**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND  
RESEARCH OF THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM IN PARTIAL  
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**STUDENT’S DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, declare that, this is my original research and that the report has never been submitted to any other institution for the award of a diploma or degree.

Ruth Bazing (MAPR18081) .....

Signature

Date

**SUPERVISOR’S CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation were supervised in accordance with guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

Major Albert Don-Chebe (Rtd) .....

Signature

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents; Mr. Felix Bazing and Ms. Agatha Tanye, my loving aunty Ms. Agnes Tanye and entire family for their support, prayers and motivation.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I express my sincerest gratitude to the Almighty God for bringing me this far and seeing me through this academic exercise.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration.....	ii
Certification .....	iii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgement .....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures.....	x
Abstract.....	xii

### CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3 Objectives of the study.....	7
1.4 Research Questions.....	7
1.5 Significance of Study.....	7
1.6 Scope of the Study.....	8

1.7 Organization of the Study.....8

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

2.1 Introduction .....9

2.2 Review of Related Literature .....9

2.2.1 Defining Public Relations.....9

2.2.2 History and Evolution of PR.....11

2.2.3 Who are the Publics.....12

2.2.4 Public Relations in Health Organisations .....10

2.2.5 The Importance of PR Departments in Hospitals.....16

2.2.6 Review of Related Studies .....17

2.3 Theoretical Framework.....18

2.3.1 The Excellence Theory .....18

2.3.2 Systems Theory .....21

2.4 Background of Greater Accra Regional Hospital..... 24

**CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

3.1 Introduction.....26

3.2 Research Design .....26

3.3 Population .....	27
3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques.....	27
3.5 Sources of Data and Data Collection Instrument .....	28
3.6 Data Collection Procedure .....	28
3.7 Data Treatment Presentation and Analysis.....	29
3.8 Research Ethics .....	29
3.9 Problems Encountered.....	30

**CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

4.1 Introduction .....	31
4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis .....	31

**CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

5.1 Introduction.....	52
5.2 Summary .....	52
5.3 Conclusion.....	55
5.4 Suggestions .....	56

5.4.1 Suggestions for Further Research .....57

Bibliography.....58

Appendix 1.....61

Appendix 2.....64

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 4.2.1 Distribution of Male and Female respondents.....31

Table 4.2.2 Distribution of respondents’ educational attainment .....32

Table 4.2.3 Patience Knowledge of GARH.....34

Table 4.2.4 Reception at GARH.....35

Table 4.2.5 Communication with Medical Staff .....37

Table 4.2.6 Communication with Non-medical Staff .....38

Table 4.2.7 Timeliness at GARH.....39

Table 4.2.8 Comparing GARH to other hospitals .....41

Table 4.2.9 Referrals to GARH .....42

Table 4.2.10 Recommendations for GARH .....43

Table 4.3.1 Distribution of Staff Respondents .....45

Table 4.3.2 Induction Training upon Employment .....	46
Table 4.3.3 How Helpful is Induction Training .....	47
Table 4.3.4 Receipt of frequent briefs .....	48
Table 4.3.5 Management-Employee Communication .....	50
Table 4.3.6 Recommendations .....	51

### **LIST OF FIGURES**

Fig 4.2.1 Distribution of Male and Female respondents.....	32	Fig
4.2.2 Distribution of respondents' educational attainment .....	33	
Fig 4.2.3 Patience Knowledge of GARH.....	35	
Fig 4.2.4 Reception at GARH.....	36	
Fig 4.2.5 Communication with Medical Staff .....	38	
Fig 4.2.6 Communication with Non-medical Staff .....	39	
Fig 4.2.7 Timeliness at GARH.....	40	
Fig 4.2.8 Comparing GARH to other hospitals .....	41	
Fig 4.2.9 Referrals to GARH .....	42	
Fig 4.2.10 Recommendations for GARH .....	44	
Fig 4.3.1 Distribution of Staff Respondents .....	45	

Fig 4.3.2 Induction Training upon Employment .....46

Fig 4.3.3 How Helpful is Induction Training.....48

Fig 4.3.4 Receipt of frequent briefs .....49

Fig 4.3.5 Management-Employee Communication .....50

Fig 4.3.6 Recommendations.....51

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to examine the role public relations plays in the management of health organization. The importance of Public relations has been confused by many organizations unaware of its position in the success of the organization as it seeks to be understood by various publics.

Public relations has not been recognized as a critical management function by organizations. It has not been placed properly and therefore has been approached in a haphazard and disorganized manner. These factors created a concern and stimulated interest to venture into this research.

The study was descriptive and employed questionnaires as data collection instrument. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages).

The major finding of the study was that the role of public relations as a management tool was not well defined. It was mixed-up and randomly done. Patients were satisfied with communication with both medical and non-medical staff.

Based on the results, the study concluded that in order for the Greater Accra Regional Hospital to remain relevant and be understood by its various publics, there was need for the organisation to set up a comprehensive and well integrated PR strateg



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Harlow (1976) defines Public relations as “a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.” PR is about influencing public opinion in order for an organization to gain a favorable image in the eyes of the public. To achieve this, an organization should have a well-organized public relations strategy.

A well thought out and planned PR strategy will go a long way in making the organization more understood by its publics and for the organization to understand its publics. Public relations will conceive themes and organizations, advice the management, deal with conflicts, survey attitudes, and promote good employer-employee relations.

Public relations is compounded of the social sciences, which teaches how individuals and groups react, and the science of communications, which provides the means of resolving conflicts and establishing contact and mutual understanding. It encompasses all forms of

communication that an organization uses to win the goodwill, support, confidence and trust of its publics (Black 1972).

The definition offered by the Public Relations Society of America, coined in 1988, is similarly broad: 'Public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other' (Public Relations Society of America 2004). More recent definitions have been more detailed. In a recent survey by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the UK Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), PR was defined as 'influencing behavior to achieve objectives through the effective management of relationships and communications' (Department of Trade and Industry and Institute of Public Relations 2003: 10). This definition is an attempt to combine the idea of managed communications with exercising influence on relationships and achieving mutual understanding, to incorporate as broad a range of activity as possible.

The CIPR defines PR as: 'About reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behavior. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics' (Institute of Public Relations 2004).

Over the years, this has changed and today, a wise company puts a PR Professional right in the inner circle of the management. The Public Relations Officer (PRO) or Corporate Communications Director reports directly to the top management. He/ she is at first tier management where he/ she will know what the management's thought is on public issues. On the other hand, the PR practitioner is expected to keep tabs on what the public is thinking and their attitude towards the organization, its services and products. By gauging the public's attitude, he/she will be in a position to make decisions and strategize on how to react to them. Whatever he/she discovers is passed on to the management for appropriate action to be taken.

The basic ingredients required for an organization's existence and success includes public support, trust, goodwill and confidence. It is the duty of the PR department to devise strategies of communicating to the diverse publics of an organization. These publics are divided into two: internal (employees) and external (clients, neighbors, media, government, stock holders. The needs and expectations of these publics are always changing. It is the responsibility of the PR department to carry out research to discover what the publics' requirements are at a particular time and act swiftly to fill in the gap as expected by the public.

Healthcare is a service to the sick, the mentally and physically incapacitated members of the society who need medical attention and help. Health institutions called hospitals, clinics; medical centers, etc. provide this service. These health institutions are either publicly owned i.e. government hospitals, or privately owned. There is no doubt that the greatest asset of every country is its citizens. This is because their general well-being determines the overall progress and development of a national economy as an enhanced quality of life means higher productivity. Any country that has unhealthy population is bound to suffer in the implementation of development programmes to improve the quality of life of the people. This has necessitated the adoption of various human rights provision at the national and international level to protect and enhance the basic needs of human kind including the right to adequate and quality health care during sickness. Article 25 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights says among other things, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services."

Health organizations are in constant contact with various publics: the government, the community at large, suppliers, clients, patients and their visitors, mass media, neighbors, and employees. They therefore require a comprehensive and well integrated public relations

strategy to reach out to these publics. PR, when planned strategically and executed well can add value to a health organization by helping it better employ people who would provide a good return to shareholders and deliver products and service value to customers (Black 1972).

Health communication is an aspect of communication that has witnessed, and continues to witness growth in the field of communications, yet there is an ardent need to step up efforts to improve health communication for the benefits of clients and customers of health institutions and or organizations. Health organizations, though classified as social services providers rather than strictly business entities, have a responsibility of fostering health consciousness through health education by providing opportunities for participation of people in the health organizations. This, according to Basavanthappa (2005) makes health institutions not to be considered in isolation from other socio-economic factors. Health service providers work directly with the community and hence provide a direct service to people at the grassroots level. Health providers utilize community resources and should encourage community participation in self-help organizations at local level. A hospital's public relations department deals with medical staff, employees, volunteers, its patients, visitors, management board, the media, government agencies and the community.

There have been several cases of 'bad' or ineffective communication in hospitals in Ghana. In Accra there have been some recorded cases at the Ridge Hospital, Madina Polyclinic and Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi.

An example is the incident published on [graphic.com.gh](http://graphic.com.gh) with the headline *Twin Baby Missing after Delivery at the Ridge Hospital* caused a lot of chaos in the country. According to the story, the father of the twins, wanted to see the corpse of his baby after the narration given by the hospital authority didn't add up. He was unable to see his dead baby whereas the doctor tried to draw his attention to the other living baby. He was unable to see the corpse of the dead baby. There was no official statement from the Ridge Hospital as far this matter is concerned.

In the same month, another story surfaced regarding a man who accused the hospital authorities of medical negligence after he underwent a surgery. According to the news article, the young man's lower abdomen was protruding and was left rotten after months. This is another example of ineffective communication at the said hospital. These are several similar cases like this happening every day in the healthcare industry and causing a lot of miscommunication and bad reputation for the health institutions.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The problem statement simply describes the content for the study and identifies the general analysis approach, or "it is the issue that exists in the literature, theory or practice that leads to a need for the study" (Creswell 1994, P: 50) and when stated effectively should answer the question; why does this research need to be conducted?" (Parjares, 2007)

Located at the heart of Accra city, the Greater Accra Regional Hospital (GARH) started as a Hospital for the European expatriates around 1928. It became a District Hospital after Ghana's independence in 1957 and was later designated as the Ridge Regional Hospital in 1997. It has now been redeveloped and transformed into an ultra-modern 620 bed capacity hospital with the full complement of specialist services that reflects the current social aspirations of the rapidly growing capital city of Ghana.

But all is not well at the hospital. Customer dissatisfaction is rampant with patients and visitors complaining of unexplained happenings and health complications. The hospital has therefore been tagged with a negative image over a certain period of time. There have been several cases of 'bad' or ineffective communication at the GARH. There have been some recorded cases at the GARH. An example is the incident published on [graphic.com.gh](http://graphic.com.gh) with the headline "***Twin Baby Missing after Delivery at the Ridge Hospital***" caused a lot of chaos in the country.

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In the same month, another story surfaced regarding a man who accused the hospital authorities of medical negligence after he underwent a surgery. According to the news article, the young man's lower abdomen was protruding and was left rotten after months. On this issue as well there was no statement from the hospital regarding the matter. This is another example of ineffective communication at the said hospital.

In view of the pivotal role played by PR in the success of an organization, does the GARH have a PR department? How are the PR tools used by the GARH to effectively communicate to its publics? These are some of the questions the study will answer.

The problem statement for this study therefore is that amidst the numerous ineffective communication and bad press the GARH is attracting, how is the hospital's management using PR to communicate with its publics?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to investigate how **Public Relations is practiced at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital**. To this end, the study had the following specific objectives:

1. To find out whether the Greater Accra Regional Hospital has a Public Relations Department.
2. To explore whether the hospital employs professional Public Relations principles and strategies in its engagement with the public.

3. Ascertain whether or not PR tools or strategies are used at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital.
4. To establish the functions of PR at Greater Accra Regional Hospital

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. Does the Greater Accra Regional Hospital have a Public Relations department?
2. Does the hospital practice professional Public Relations?
3. What PR tools or strategies are used at Greater Accra Regional Hospital?
4. What are the functions of PR at Greater Accra Regional Hospital?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The government of Ghana has invested huge sums of money into the development of GARH, thus it is the hope that the findings of this study would:

1. Contribute to the existing body of knowledge on PR practice in health organizations.
2. Provide information to the management of GARH and other health organizations the core tools of PR management which includes: planning, coordinating, directing, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the organizations will achieve their goals in a cost effective way.
3. Little has been written about PR management in health organizations in Ghana. It is therefore imperative that a study like this be carried out to pave way for further research.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study confined itself to investigating whether Public Relations is practiced in health organizations. It will be conducted in Greater Accra Regional Hospital in Accra. The population of the study was the management hierarchy at the hospital, employees and clients of the hospital.

## **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The work is organized into five main chapters that is chapters one to five. Chapter 1 sets the introductory stage to the study. Chapter 2 deals with the review of related literature, while Chapter 3 is the methodology used to carry out the study. Chapter 4 contains results and discussions of the study and chapter 5 is summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This Chapter is in two parts; the first part examines related literature in the study area, review of related works and summarizes what other researchers have performed. The second part examines the theoretical underpinnings of the study. It puts the theoretical bases for the discussions as far as Public Relations in organizations is concerned. There is also an overview and background of the Greater Accra Regional Hospital.

#### **2.2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

##### **2.2.1 Defining Public Relations**

Various Public Relations Professional Organizations and public relations practitioners have made efforts over the years to develop a succinct yet thorough definition of public relations. Baran (2004) defines public relations as the management function that focuses on the relationships and communications that individuals and organizations have with other groups (called publics) for the purpose of creating mutual goodwill. Many institutions, institutes, authors and individuals have their own definitions of public relations. Regardless of the number of these definitions they all have certain common characteristics.

American Association for Public Affairs, known by short PRSA in November 1982 said that public relations helps our complex, diverse society in decision-making and allow it to function efficiently, so that it contributes to the achievement of mutual understanding between the institution (organization) and their environment (target group).

James Grunig and Todd Hunt in the famous article *Managing Public Relations* (1984) defined public relations as “managing communications between the organization and its public.” This at first glance is quite simple definition but perhaps best reflects the essence of public relations. In fact, hundreds of definitions of PR even now largely come down to communication, which is basically the essence of public relations. Public relations are the process of communicating with its public organizations to achieve mutual understanding and realization of common interests.

In these definitions, public relations is emphasized as an important factor effecting the success and the failure of an institution as a result of the interaction with social milieu and sense of social responsibility. Moreover, public relations is stated as a management function covering planned efforts. The strategic side of public relations, which has a wide influence on reputation, perception and problem solving process, is emphasized. The strategic communication counselling role of public relations in analysing the trends and verifying the threats as a social science is remarked. The brand image of public relations and its function in developing a brand image are pointed.

So, public relations is presented as a “win-win” technique between the institution and target community. Public relations hold a mediatory position. To develop relations based on dual communication, good -will and faith is among the activities of public relations.

### **2.2.2 History and Evolution of Public Relations**

Baran (2004) indicates that archaeologists in Iraq have uncovered a tablet dating form 1800BC. It provided farmers with information on sowing, irrigating and harvesting their crops. Julius Ceaser fed the people of the Roman Empire constant reports of his achievements to maintain morale and solidify his reputation and position of power. Genghis Khan would send “advance

men” to tell stories of his might, hoping to frighten his enemies into surrendering. Public relations campaigns abounded in America and helped create colonies. Earlier settlers in the Americas would tell overstatements, half-truths and lies to entice more settlers from Europe to the New World. The Boston Tea Party was a well-organized media event organized to attract public attention for a good cause. It was a good attempt for a pseudo-event.

George Washington employed the public relations acumen of Mason Weems in 1800 to polish his reputation in a glowing and often fictitious bibliography “The Father of Our Country. ” In these examples, people and organizations used communication to inform, to build an image and to influence public opinion. In its earlier stages, PR was associated more with propaganda than with useful information hence acquiring a deceitful, huckster image. In 1889 Westinghouse Electric established the first corporate public relations department to ensure that the company positions were always clear and in the public eye. Pioneer PR practitioner, Ivy Ledbetter Lee came to the aid of the railroad industry beset by accidents and strikes. He escorted reporters to the scene of trouble, established press centres, and distributed press releases and assisted reporters in obtaining additional information and photographs.

PR campaigns continued to take root in World War 1 spearheaded by George Creel in America. It was Edward Bernays who began to emphasize the value of assessing the public’s feelings towards an organization. PR professionals began representing their various publics to their clients just as they represented their clients to those publics.

According to Baran (2004), several factors have contributed into shaping the identity of PR, influencing the way the industry does its job, and clarify the necessity for PR in any organization. These include:

- Advances in technology made possible mass production, distribution and marketing of goods. Communication technology made it possible to communicate more efficiently and effectively with the ever larger and more specific audiences.

- Growth of the middle class which was better educated and more aware of the world around it, require information about people and organizations.
- Growth of organizations; as organizations grew bigger, the public saw them as more powerful and more remote. People became curious and suspicious about these organizations that seemed to influence all aspects of their lives.
- Better research tools were developed with sophisticated research methodologies and statistical techniques. This allowed organizations to better judge the effectiveness of PR campaigns.
- Professionalization; numerous national and international PR organizations helped to professionalize the industry and clean up its reputation.

### **2.2.3 Who are the Publics?**

The first and very important task for the public relations officer and the entire organization (the hospital) is the definition of the publics. The concept of the public has its origin from the Latin word *publicus*. “The early use of the word was to recognize the two basic meanings: one is included in the term *res publica*, and its applicable to general availability, openness and accessibility to the people, in terms of public place; in the second case the term is associated with matters of general interest or even more specific with the official and public affairs.”

Lanza-Posavec, (1995)

Although the concept of the public is subjected to various interpretations, for Cutlip A. Center and G. Broom public is “a mosaic made up of different ethical, racial, religious, geographical political, professional, social and other groups, each of which should be taken into account”. Philip Kotler in his book *Marketing Management* believes that “the public may present some potential buyers of products of the company, current users, decision makers or those that affect

the decision. Public may be represented by individuals, groups of people or society in a broader sense”.

Defining the public should start by “isolating” the internal and external public; taking into account the broad public health sector such as what the internal public of one hospital can do: patients, physicians/colleagues, medical personnel, and families of patients, the administration of the hospital, hospital departments, hospital unions, Ministry of Health, School of Medicine and others. Relations with the public after defining the internal public starts to define external public of one hospital or clinic. External public can be: media, opinion makers, associations/societies, city government, county or local government, county health organizations, WHO, universities, etc. Defining internal and external public helps us to better understand the concepts of health and public relations, but also to connect them in a “new definition”.

In line with this view, public relations in the health communication process of health institutions (hospitals, primary health care centres, etc.) with its internal and external public to achieve mutual respect, understanding and mutual interests.

#### **2.2.4 Public Relations in Health Organizations**

The practice of public relations in health care has changed together with the dramatic changes in health care. In some sense, public relations in health care is not particularly different from public relations in any other industry given that the overall objective of Public Relations is still to “match long-term relationships” and “manage reputation,” according to L. Traynowicz Hetherington, D. Ekachai and M. Parkinson. According to Traynowicz-Hetherington et al.,

healthcare is a unique industry. Some theorists argue that medicine is different from any other industry because of its disposal (life, death and recovery), rapid and profound changes in the health system and the communication between the client (or patient) and suppliers (supplier of health care within the defined system). The motivation for improving the health care industry is not only focused to the cost reduction which is a universal principle known in other industries. The desire for progress of health care processes is motivated by the supplier that seeks to improve the quality of care in the best possible way. Therefore, employees of public relations who are responsible for promoting, improving and reversal of the overall system in the health industry must get the motivation to care for the human being.

Baran (2004) lists the following as some of the activities and functions of PR:

- Counselling; PR practitioners offer routine advice to an organization's management concerning policies, relationships and communication with its various publics. Center and Jackson (2002) says that when a policy decision has been made, managers must understand and agree that it should be implemented, then it is passed to the employees and when need arises, other publics are made aware. This is the work of PR.
- Development and fund raising; organizations survive through voluntary contributions in time and money of their members, friends, employees and supporters. PR helps to demonstrate the need for those contributions. *"An organization's reputation, profitability and even its continued existence can depend on the degree to which its targeted "publics" support its goals and policies. Public relations specialists serve as advocates for businesses and build and maintain positive relationships with the public.*  
”
- Media relations; media outlets have increased and so are advances in media technology. This makes them more complex to deal with. PR helps management to understand

various media, preparation and organization of materials for them and in placing those materials.

- Special events and public participation; PR is used to stimulate interest in an organization through well planned activities designed to facilitate interaction between an organization and its publics.
- Employee communication; Center and Jackson (2002) indicate that to promote positive external PR, an organization must have a sound internal PR. A satisfied and enthusiastic employee is an extremely effective and credible PR person. Employees want to know the direction the organization is headed, why it is heading that way and the role they have to play towards that particular direction.

Jefkins (1998) provides the following as a brief summary of the roles and activities of a PR manager and staff (the list is not exhaustive).

1. Writing and distributing news releases.
2. Editing and producing staff magazines and organizing other forms of internal communication like video tapes, slide presentations, bulletin boards, etc.
3. Editing and producing print like educational literature, company history, annual reports, induction literature for new staff, etc.
4. Organizing PR exhibitions and displays.
5. Commissioning and maintaining forms of corporate identity and house styling such as logos, colour schemes, print house styles and typography, livery of vehicles, distinctive clothing etc.
6. Attending at appropriate meetings of the board and meetings of marketing, sales and other executives.
7. Representation of the company at trade association meetings.
8. Commissioning opinion surveys.

All these activities and more have to be fitted into a planned PR programme and conducted within an agreed budget.

### **2.2.5 The Importance of Public Relations Department in Hospitals**

The field of Public Relations is a significant need for institutions and organizations. With the changes in worldview, public relations becomes sine qua non for every institution. This condition results in the increase in the number of public relations departments or brings out a need for the establishment of public relations departments in the institutions. Hospitals are institutions where patients and casualties, the ones doubtful about any disease or those demanding check-up, are examined, treated, put under psychiatric observation, rehabilitated, diagnosed either by being hospitalized or not(Özgen,1995).

The main function of hospitals is to treat the diseases which are the basic reasons for patients in applying to hospitals. Hospitals are leading institutions among the public utilities giving service to public.

Today, as it is in all the sectors, there is a competition between institutions in health sector. Therefore, the impressions and the effects the hospitals will have on their target communities are significant for hospitals to survive. Developing positive impressions and effects can be accomplished through effective public relations services. That is why it is imperative for hospitals in Ghana to make an effort at creating a positive reputation with their publics.

### **2.2.6 Review of Related Studies**

In a study conducted by Hilmi, 2014 on the **Role Played by PR Professionals in the Dissemination of Health Information in Hospitals in Oman**, the objective was to ascertain the role Public Relations played and whether the practice was the standard. At the end of the research, it was revealed that the practice of Public Relations Departments in Omani hospitals didn't meet the international standard and criteria of the PR practice in health sector. Also, channels of communication between the Public Relations Departments and patients as well as health professionals were not in pace with the rapid developments in the ICT sector and the use of new media outlets to serve the purpose of the departments. Finally, it discovered that PR practitioners were not involved in planning and decision making in the hospitals.

In another study completed by Tomic, Lasic, & Tomic, 2010, the main aim was to analyse how public relations can help health care institutions in communicating with the target population. It concluded that “to successfully communicate with the public, all health facilities should define/isolate their internal and external publics. Within health care institutions should be determined/defined the person(s) for the (internal and external) communications.” Consequently, according to the study, health institutions must move from reactive to proactive communication with their public. Proactive communication must be bidirectional (symmetric) in order to satisfy the interests of all the patients and the public.

A study conducted by Peter, 2007 sought to examine the role PR plays in the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital. From the findings, it was established that: The role of PR at the hospital was not well defined, even though the hospital was engaged in numerous PR activities, there was a need for a PR department to adequately handle those activities. PR was therefore

disorganized, done in an ad hoc basis and haphazardly approached. The researcher therefore recommended the need for AIC Kijabe Hospital to establish a PR and Communication department. The department should be staffed with professional PR personnel to handle PR issues at the hospital.

These studies have one similarity; they all agree that Public Relations is important and an integral aspect of every organization including health care institutions and thus must be given the needed attention by hospital administrators.

## **2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.3.1 The Excellence Theory**

The Excellence theory is a universal theory of public relations that “specifies how public relations makes organizations more effective, how it is formed and done when it contributes most to organizational effectiveness, the conditions in organizations and their environments that make organizations more effective, and how the monetary value of public relations can be found”. The excellence theory resulted from a 15-year study of best practices in communication management funded by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation and directed by James E. Grunig. The theory incorporates a bit of middle range theories of public relations, theories of publics, public relations and strategic management, models of public relations, evaluation of public relations, employee communication, public relations roles, gender, diversity, power, activism, ethics and societal responsibility, and global public relations.

The theory was tested through survey research of heads of public relations, CEOs, and employees in 327 organizations (corporations, non-profit organizations, government agencies,

and associations) in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The survey research was followed by qualitative interviews with heads of public relations, other public relations practitioners, and CEOs in 25 organizations with the highest and lowest scores on a scale of excellence produced by statistical analysis of the survey data.

The excellence theory first explained the value of public relations to organizations and society based on the social responsibility of managerial decisions and the quality of relationships with stakeholder publics. For an organization to be effective, according to the theory, it must behave in ways that solve the problems and satisfy the goals of stakeholders as well as of management. If it does not, stakeholders will either pressure the organization to change or oppose it in ways that add cost and risk to organizational policies and decisions. To behave in socially acceptable ways, organizations must scan their environment to identify publics who are affected by potential organizational decisions or who want organizations to make decisions to solve problems that are important to them. Then, organizations must communicate symmetrically with publics (taking the interests of both the organization and publics into account) to cultivate high-quality, long-term relationships with them.

The interviews with CEOs and senior public relations officers revealed that good relationships were of value to organizations because they reduced the costs of litigation, regulation, legislation, and negative publicity caused by poor relationships; reduced the risk of making decisions that affect different stakeholders; or increased revenue by providing products and services needed by stakeholders.

According to the Excellence Theory, the value of public relations lies in organization-public relations. Good relationship with its strategic publics is helpful for an organization to develop and achieve goals desired by both the organization and its publics, reduce costs of negative publicity, and increase revenue by providing products and services needed by stakeholders.

To maximize the value of public relations, public relations must identify strategic publics and build long-term relationships with them through symmetrical communication programs. The Excellence study identified characteristics of effective public relations in four major classes:

- 1. Empowerment of the public relations function:** effective organization must empower public relations as a critical management function
- 2. Communicator roles:** let public relations executives play managerial role as well as administrative role
- 3. Organization of communication function:** public relations should be an integrated communication function and separate from instead of being sublimated to marketing or other management functions
- 4. Public relations models:** effective organization should base its internal and external communication and relationship building on a two-way symmetrical model.

Some scholars have critiqued the excellence theory saying the survey was held in Western countries under western cultures. Thus using the model in other countries with different cultures might alter the theoretical underpinning. According to (Kenny, 2016) in his literature review critiquing the excellence theory, the strategic managerial role is more beholden to the organisation than its publics and fails to represent a diversity of voices in strategic decision making. Research into those publics and especially listening to those publics is inadequate and long-term relationships are inevitably imbalanced in favour of the organisation.

Also, two-way symmetrical communication, dialogue and genuine relationships have been described as unachievable in practice. Despite the advent of enabling technologies, dialogue with and commitment to stakeholder groups in business is essentially instrumental, providing

analysis and contributing to strategic planning, Where the company's interest is profit-driven, the dialogue inevitably becomes normative, leading to debate over whether consequences of dialogue can really be considered for the common good.

(L. A. Gurning et al. 1998) however demonstrated that the excellence theory is generic to many settings, as long as the theory is used differently when contextual variables are different.

### **2.3.2 Systems Theory**

Systems theory is one of the predominant theoretical lines of thinking underpinning much of public relations practice today. Propounded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), the theory states that mechanical, organic and social systems (including organizations) can be defined by their interactions with their environment. There are three main systems perspectives that are commonly employed in the business context; mechanistic (sometimes known as closed), organismic and adaptive (the final two being examples of open systems). All three provide public relations with valuable insights.

#### ***Mechanistic or Closed Systems***

Early in the evolution of management theory mechanistic or closed systems concepts were applied to realize effective management. These theories focused on how to manage a unit in an establishment or an organization itself without considering relationships with other units or with the organization's environment. These organizations were concerned to a greater extent with the internal workings of the governing body and paid little attention to external environmental matters. These theories originated in the applied sciences and viewed the universe as essentially a clockwork mechanism with humans being subject to the same universal principles as everything else. The effect of closed or mechanistic systems is

equilibrium; any disturbances are counteracted so that the symmetry of the original state is re-established. Mechanistic systems are projected to assemble pre-set goals and are unadaptable to change. More recent management theorists assume an open systems approach.

### ***Open systems: The Organismic Model***

In open systems, units within an organization affect and are affected by other units and the organization as a whole is responsive to environmental change. According to Katz and Khan (1978), organizations are open social systems with emphasis on two faces,

- System character where movement in one part leads to movement in other parts in predictable fashion, and
- Openness to environmental inputs, and then they are always in a state of flux.

The key elements of open systems, according to Katz and Khan (1978), are:

- Input: without which a system runs down (entropy). These inputs can be the system's own output (for example money) or from the wider environment outside the system
- Throughput (or transformation): the processing of transforming inputs into outputs (for example, making a product)
- Output: whatever the system eventually produces (for example, end product)
- Interrelationship or interdependence: 'the interlocking relationship between the parts of a system and the whole system'. The output of open systems affects the environment and feedback will confirm whether or not that output is appropriate. That is then used by the system to make adjustments. The process is cyclical and continuous
- Transactional relationship with the environment: the environment is not constant and must be under continual investigation
- Boundaries: both connect and separate the organization from its environment.

An open system receives input from the environment which impacts on its ideal or desired goal states (or objectives). In response, feedback from within the system causes adjustments in the systems' structure (what it is) and its processes (what it does). To preserve the system this may lead internally to alterations in goal states (or not). Externally, outputs may maintain or change the environment. In organismic systems the objective is survival, but to achieve this they have to adjust to maintain balance within themselves and with their environments. The term used to refer to relatively stable goal states that nevertheless can change as a result of system inputs is Homeostasis.

### ***Open systems: The Adaptive Model***

Buckley (1967) was the first to propose a process or adaptive systems model which he saw as a progression from and a critique of both mechanistic and organismic systems. He drew heavily on the field of cybernetic research to develop his theory and laid particular emphasis on the role of adaptive feedback being actively sought in order to initiate purposeful change. Thus, Buckley's focus was on exploring morphogenesis (how the system itself changes).

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), an adaptive organization is not static, but 'emerges from a network of interactions among individuals in which information is selectively perceived and interpreted in accordance with the meaning it holds for the actors involved'. Buckley maintained that variety, tension and a desire to develop (learn) through feedback are essential to the adaptive system. Furthermore, interaction between the organization and the environment is not mechanical (a seeking of feedback to make adjustments to a self-perpetuating system), but an ongoing act where the development of shared meaning and mutual understanding is vital. This involves a cyclical process where information is given meaning by each participant in the communication process and is typical of the network approach. An inherent quality of adaptive systems is that they are transformed over time. While two-way asymmetric public relations has

leanings toward the adaptive systems approach, it is the two-way symmetric model which fits best.

Systems theory provides a useful theoretical underpinning for thinking about the role of PR since it notes that the wellbeing or otherwise of organizations is dependent on establishing and maintaining relationships both within itself and with its environment.

## **2.4 Background and Overview of the Greater Accra Regional Hospital (GARH)**

The GARH formerly known as the Ridge Regional Hospital is situated at North Ridge (along the castle road) in the Osu-Klottey Sub-Metro of the Accra Metropolitan Area in the Greater Accra Region (GAR). It occupies a total land area of about 15.65 acres.

As the Regional Hospital for the Greater Accra Region, its catchment area is the whole of the Greater Accra Region, with an estimated population of over 4,671,363 (2015 projection based on 2010 census by the Ghana Statistical Service, GSS). The immediate catchment area, however, includes the following suburbs: Ridge, Nima, Maamobi, Kanda, Accra New Town, Kotobabi, Osu, La, Adabraka, Achimota, Airport Residential Area and Central Accra.

Located at the heart of Accra city, the GARH started as a Hospital for the European expatriates around 1928. It became a District Hospital after Ghana's independence in 1957 and was later designated as the Ridge Regional Hospital in 1997. It has now been redeveloped and transformed into an ultra-modern 620 bed capacity hospital with the full complement of specialist services that reflects the current social aspirations of the rapidly growing capital city of Ghana.

Despite the important functions performed by the hospital, the infrastructure and equipment to support the service delivery was a critical challenge in the hospital. This situation posed a hindrance to maximizing the output of the health professionals as well as increasing uptake of service at the facility.

In response to these challenges, the Government, in the context of its commitment to improving healthcare infrastructure towards Universal Health Coverage, has made impressive efforts at replacing the old Hospital with new modern facilities that reflect the current social aspirations of the rapidly growing capital city of Ghana.

Theory, related literature and research shows and proves that healthcare institutions do need PR in their activities. Also, the benefits Public Relations grants an organization especially the hospital is immense. In Ghana however, not much research has been done in the area. There is a gap in research as far as studies on the role of Public Relations in health care institutions is concerned. This research will fill that gap.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses research design, defines the population, the sample size and sampling techniques, the instruments for the data collection, and data collection procedure. The sections in this chapter include:

- Research design
- Target population
- Sample and sampling techniques
- Research instruments
- Data collection and analysis

#### **3.2 Research Design**

Research design is the conceptual structure within which research would be conducted. The function of research design is to provide for the collection of relevant information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money. This study examined the current position with regard to the practice of PR at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital. Creswell (1994) explains quantitative research as the type of research that explains phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (in particular, statistics). Based on the study, quantitative research was used under which descriptive research was used as a means of achieving the purpose and specific objectives of this study. The design took into

consideration the type of data or evidence collected, composition of the sample, methods and tools of data.

This study is descriptive because it aimed at finding out the whether GARH practices Public Relations and the PR tools and strategies they use.

### **3.3 Research Population**

In research, the term “population” includes all members of a defined group that one is studying or collecting information on for data driven decisions. The target population for this study constituted the staff of the Greater Accra Regional Hospital, and hospital clients/patients.

### **3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

It will be impossible to select all members of the population to take part in the research. According to Best and Khan (1993) 10% of such a population is a fairly good representative sample. Thus, 30 respondents were sampled from the staff of the hospital while a sample of 100 clients were chosen to represent the patients. The final sample therefore included; 30 employees, 100 clients/patients, a total of 130 respondents.

Probability sampling technique is the kind of sampling in which every element or case of the population has an equal chance of being selected. It is used when the results of the study will be generalized from the sample to the target population. Under probability sampling, simple random sampling method was used to select the sample for the research.

### **3.5 Sources of Data and Data Collection Instrument**

For this study, the main source of primary data is the Greater Accra Regional Hospital. Collection of primary data is by questionnaire. Data was also collected from books, websites, and other researches all of which have been referenced at the bibliography section of the study.

A questionnaire was used as the main instrument for collecting data in this research. A questionnaire targeting doctors, nurses, administrators and patients was developed. Items were determined based on the objectives of the study and consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions. There were two (2) questionnaires; one targeting staff of the hospital and the other targeting patients.

Section A contained items relating to information about patients' communication with nurses during their visits to the hospital. For the staff questionnaire, Section A sought information regarding how the hospital communicates with internal publics. Section B consisted of items that sought to elicit information on the biographical characteristics of respondents.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

Before the study was carried out, the researcher sought for the permission from the hospital administrators by first sending a letter of introduction from the Ghana Institute of Journalism. They requested an ethics approval form; which was presented as well before data collection began. The researcher used simple random sampling so that every person had an equal opportunity to being selected as one's sample and again it ensures that the selection of one person is independent of another person

### **3.7 Data Treatment, Presentation and Analysis**

All questions were coded with values, imputed into computer software, that is, Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) and processed. Descriptive statistics were used as a scale of measurement with the use of frequencies, as statistical tools for analysing each research question/objective

### **3.8 Research Ethics**

Before the study was carried out, the researcher submitted an ethics approval form to the hospital administration. The consent of respondents was sought by explaining the purpose of the study to them and assuring them of their confidentiality. In addition to this, the researcher discussed the intended data collection period of one week with the management of the hospital before the questionnaire administration started. The questionnaires were read and interpreted to respondents who could not read nor write for their consent before a questionnaire was administered for them.

### **3.9 Problems Encountered**

Difficulty in getting the busy health workers to respond to questionnaires and interviews.

Most of them especially the Doctors had very little time to spare. Too much time spent in grouping similar responses for open-ended questions as well as coding of the Questionnaires. However, to address this problem, the researcher got a course mates to assist in coding the questionnaires and this helped in reducing the number of days that the researcher used for the exercise.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

With diagrams, tables, figures and charts, this part presents the findings of the study.

Description and interpretation have been done here to analyse data.

#### 4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis/Discussion

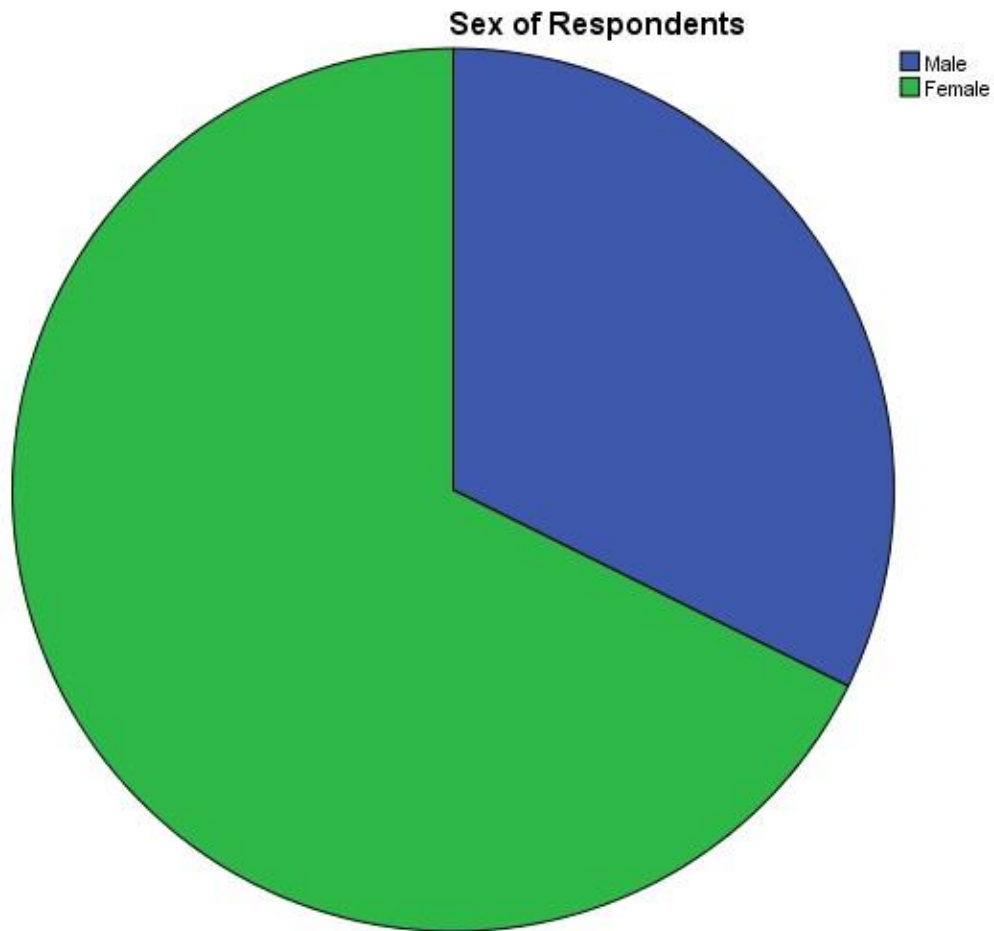
##### a) Sex of Respondents

**Table 4.2.1: Distribution of Male and Female respondents**

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	33	33.0
Female	67	67.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 4.2.1 above shows 33 males and 67 females comprised the respondents for this research.

This translates into 33% and 67% respectively. The implication of the data is that more females were represented during the sample selection.



*Fig 4.2.1*

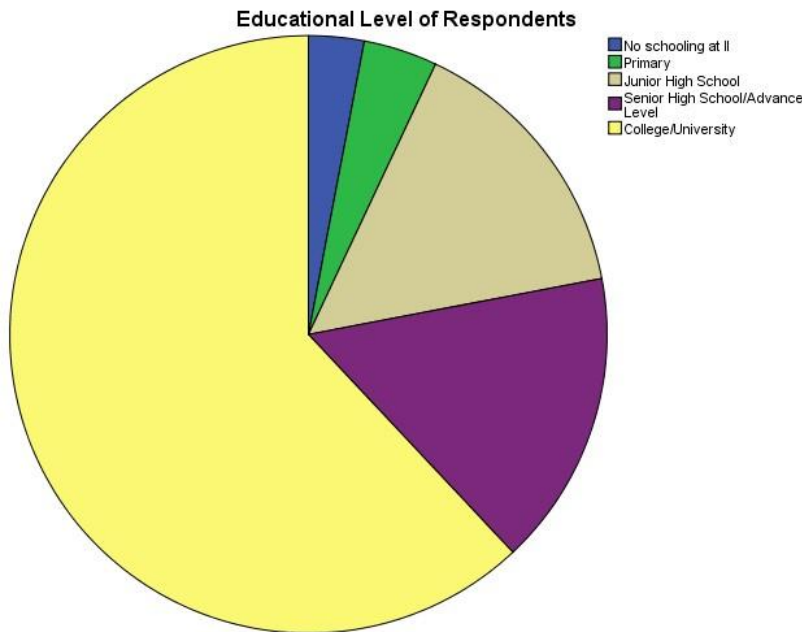
**b) Educational Attainment of Respondents**

**Table 4.2.2: Distribution of respondents' educational attainment.**

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Valid Percent
No schooling at all	3	3.0
Primary	4	4.0
Junior High School	15	15.0

Senior High School/Advance Level	16	16.0
College/University	62	62.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 4.2.2 shows out of the 100 patients sampled, 62% had college/university qualifications, 16% were had high school/advance level certificates, 15% had finished junior high school, 4% primary and 3% had no schooling at all. This implies that a considerable number of the respondents were highly educated.



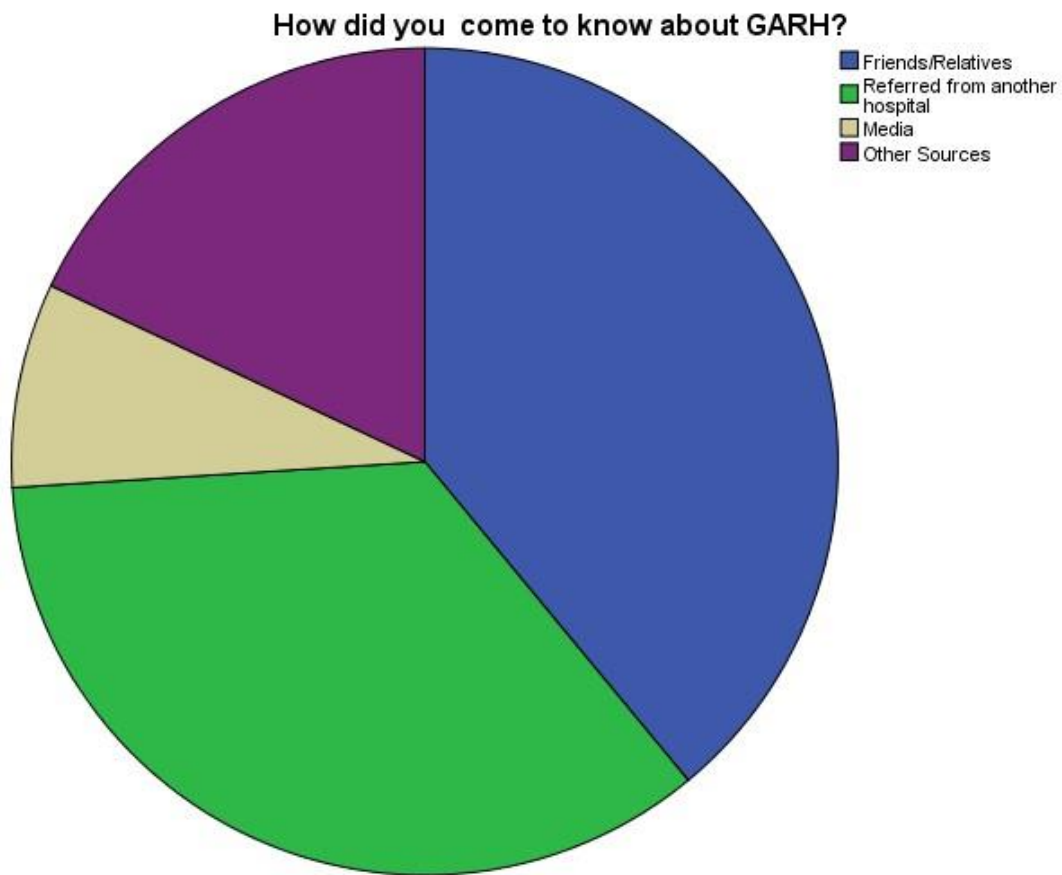
**Fig 4.2.2**

**Patients' Knowledge of the Greater Accra Regional Hospital Table 4.2.3: Patients' Knowledge of the Greater Accra Regional Hospital**

How did you come to know about GARH?	Frequency	Valid Percent
	39	

Friends/Relatives	35	39.0
Referred from another hospital	8	35.0
Media	18	8.0
Other Sources	100	18.0
Total		100.0

Table 4.2.3 above shows how respondents came to know about the hospital. Out of 100 respondents 39% were from recommendations by friends/relatives, 35% were referred from another hospital, 18% from other sources and 8% through the media. Given the above data, it appears a considerable number of the hospital's clients/patients come from recommendations from friends and relatives followed by referrals from other hospitals.



*Fig 4.2.3*

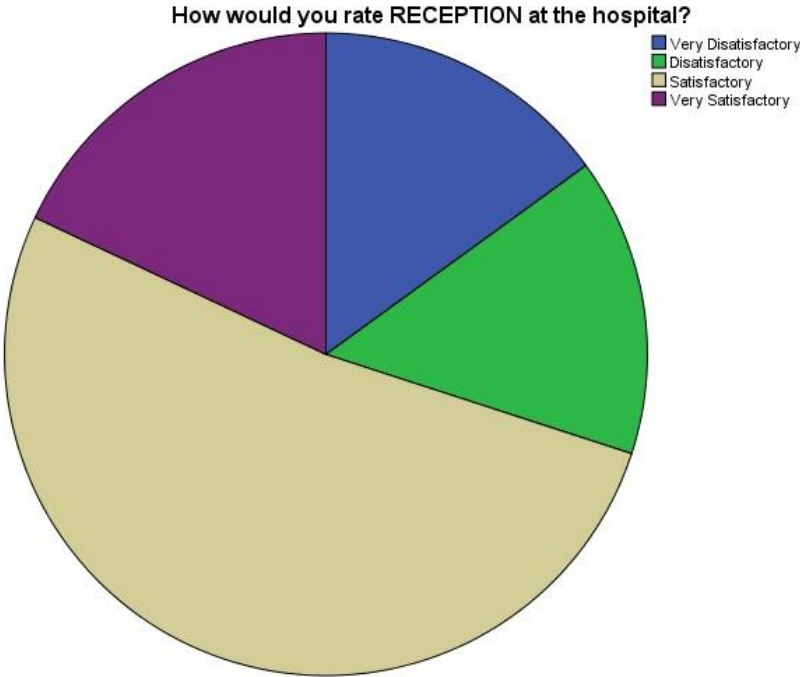
**c) Reception at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital**

**Table 4.2.4: Reception at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital**

Reception at the GARH	Frequency	Valid Percent
Very Dissatisfactory	15	15.0
	15	15.0

Dissatisfactory	52	52.0
Satisfactory	18	18.0
Very Satisfactory	100	100.0
Total		

From Table 4.2.4, Fifty two (52) out of 100 respondents said reception at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital is satisfactory, representing 52% of the sample. 18% rated reception as ‘very satisfactory’, 15% rated dissatisfactory and very dissatisfactory respectively. It appears then from the data that clients/patients are relatively satisfied with reception at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital.



**Fig 4.2.4**

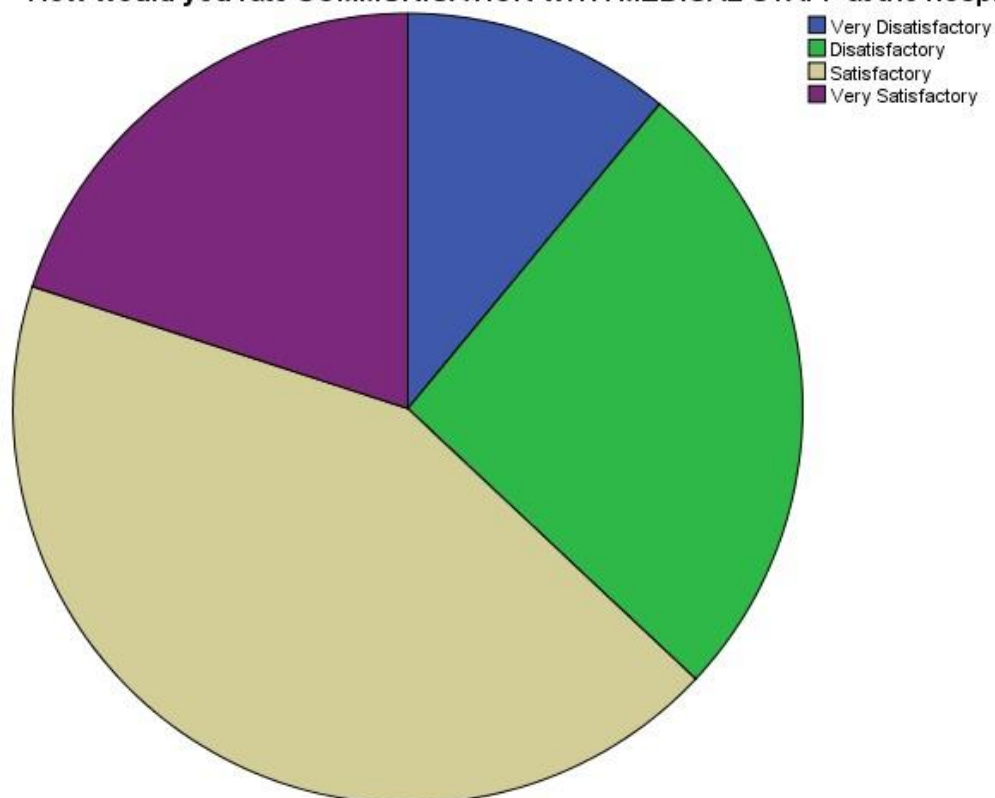
#### d) Communication with Medical Staff

**Table 4.2.5: Communication with Medical Staff**

Communication with Medical Staff	Frequency	Valid Percent
Very Dissatisfactory	11	11.0
Dissatisfactory	26	26.0
Satisfactory	43	43.0
Very Satisfactory	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0

In Table 4.2.5 above, 43% out of 100 respondents rated communication with medical staff as satisfactory, 20% rated very satisfactory. On the other hand, 26% rated communication with medical staff as dissatisfactory and 11% as very dissatisfactory. This implies clients/patients are relatively satisfied with communication with medical staff.

**How would you rate COMMUNICATION WITH MEDICAL STAFF at the hospital?**



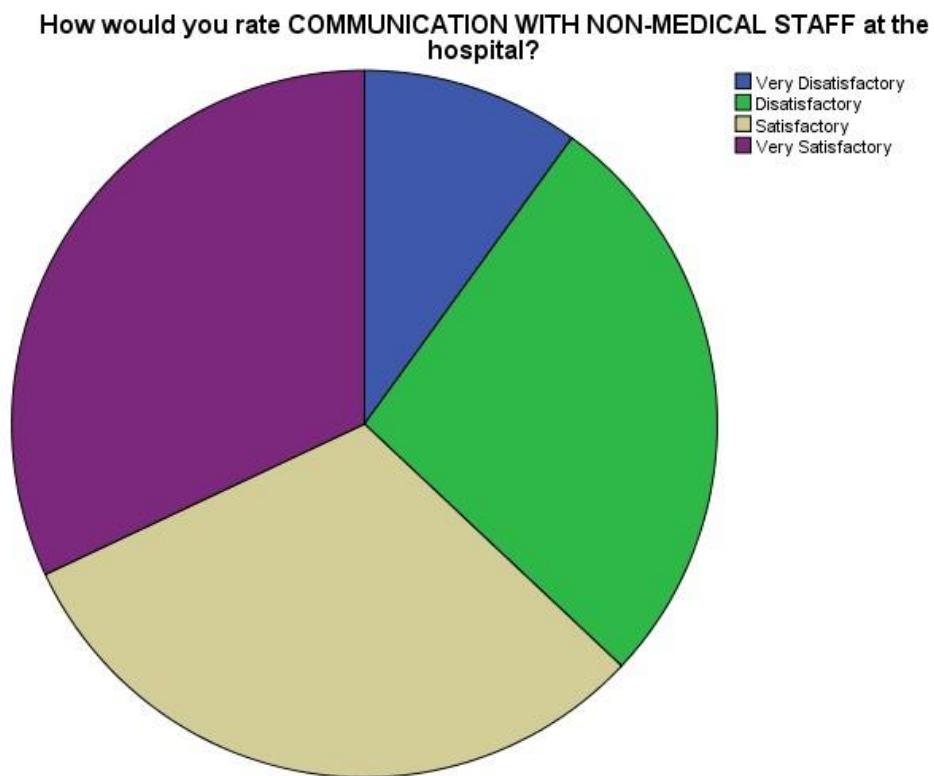
**Fig 4.2.5**

**e) Communication with non-medical staff**

**Table 4.2.6: Communication with non-medical staff**

Communication with non-medical staff	Frequency	Valid Percent
Very Dissatisfactory	10	10.0
Dissatisfactory	27	27.0
Satisfactory	31	31.0
Very Satisfactory	32	32.0
Total	100	100.0

From the table above, 32% out of 100 respondents rated communication with non-medical staff as very satisfactory, 31% rated satisfactory. On the other hand, 27% rated communication with medical staff as dissatisfactory and 10% as very dissatisfactory. Given the data above, clients are relatively satisfied with communication with non-medical staff.



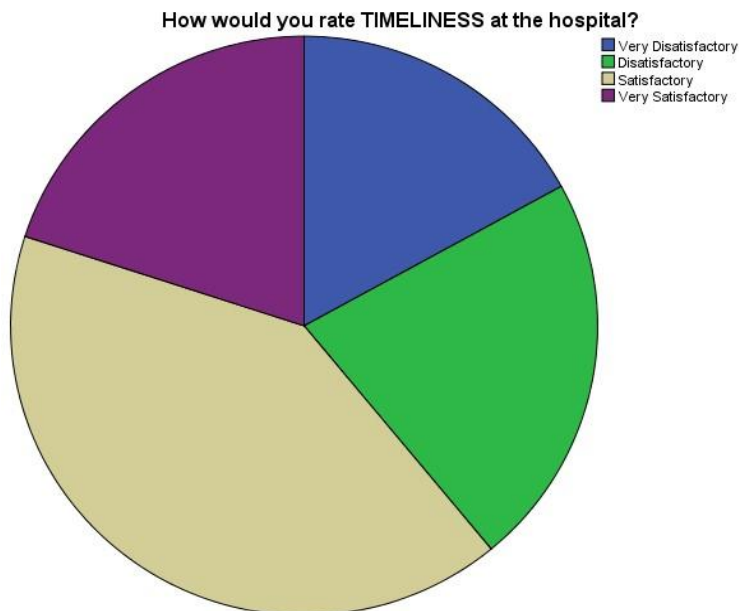
**Fig 4.2.6**

**f) Timeliness at the hospital**

**Table 4.2.7: Timeliness at the hospital**

Timeliness at the hospital	Frequency	Valid Percent
Very Dissatisfactory	17	17.0
Dissatisfactory	22	22.0
Satisfactory	41	41.0
Very Satisfactory	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 4.2.7 above shows 41% out of 100 respondents rated timeliness at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital as satisfactory, 20% rated it as satisfactory. On the other hand, 22% rated is as dissatisfactory and 17% as very dissatisfactory. It appears from the data above clients/patients are relatively satisfied with the hospital’s timeliness.



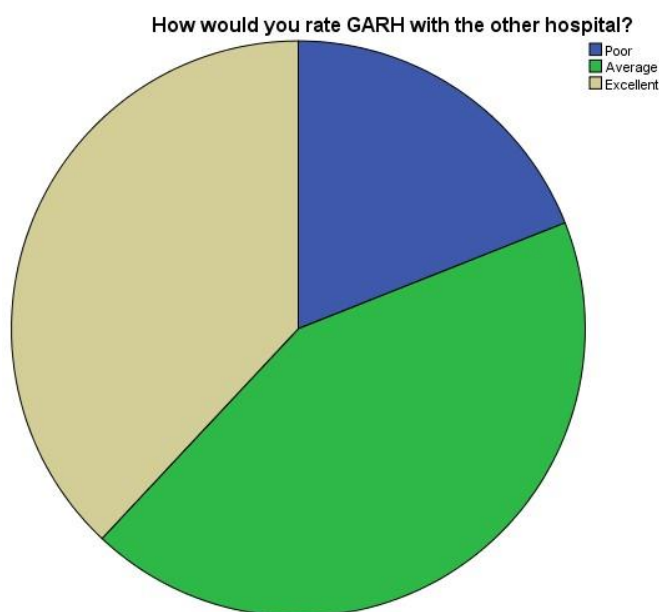
**Fig4.2.7**

**g) Comparing Greater Accra Hospital to other hospitals**

**Table 4.2.8 Comparing Greater Accra Hospital to other hospitals**

Comparing GARH to other hospitals	Frequency	Valid Percent
Poor	19	19.0
Average	43	43.0
Excellent	38	38.0
Total	100	100.0

Based on the respondents' interactions with both medical and non-medical staff of the Greater Accra Regional Hospital, they were asked to rate GARH as compared to other hospitals they had visited before. From Table 4.2.8 above, out of 100 respondents, 43% rated GARH as average, 38% excellent and 19% poor. This implies that a considerable number of the selected sample think GARH is performing better than other hospitals they have been to.



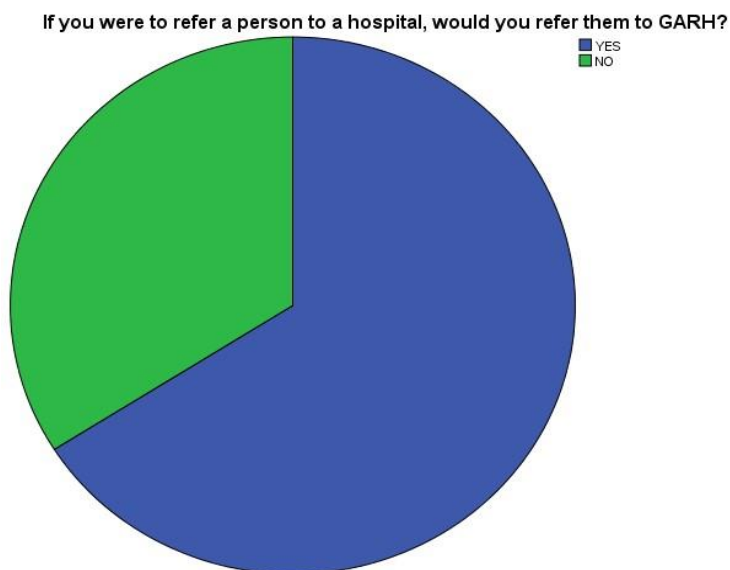
**Fig 4.2.8**

## h) Referrals to Greater Accra Regional Hospital

**Table 4.2.9: Referrals to Greater Accra Regional Hospital**

Referrals to GARH	Frequency	Valid Percent
YES	66	66.0
NO	34	34.0
Total	100	100.0

When asked whether they (respondents) would refer friends and relatives to the Greater Accra Regional Hospital, 66 out of 100 respondents answered in the affirmative, 34 said no, they would not refer their friends/relatives to the GRAH; representing 66% and 34% respectively. This implies more than half of the sample selected will refer friends/relatives to the Greater Accra Regional Hospital.



**Fig 4.2.9**

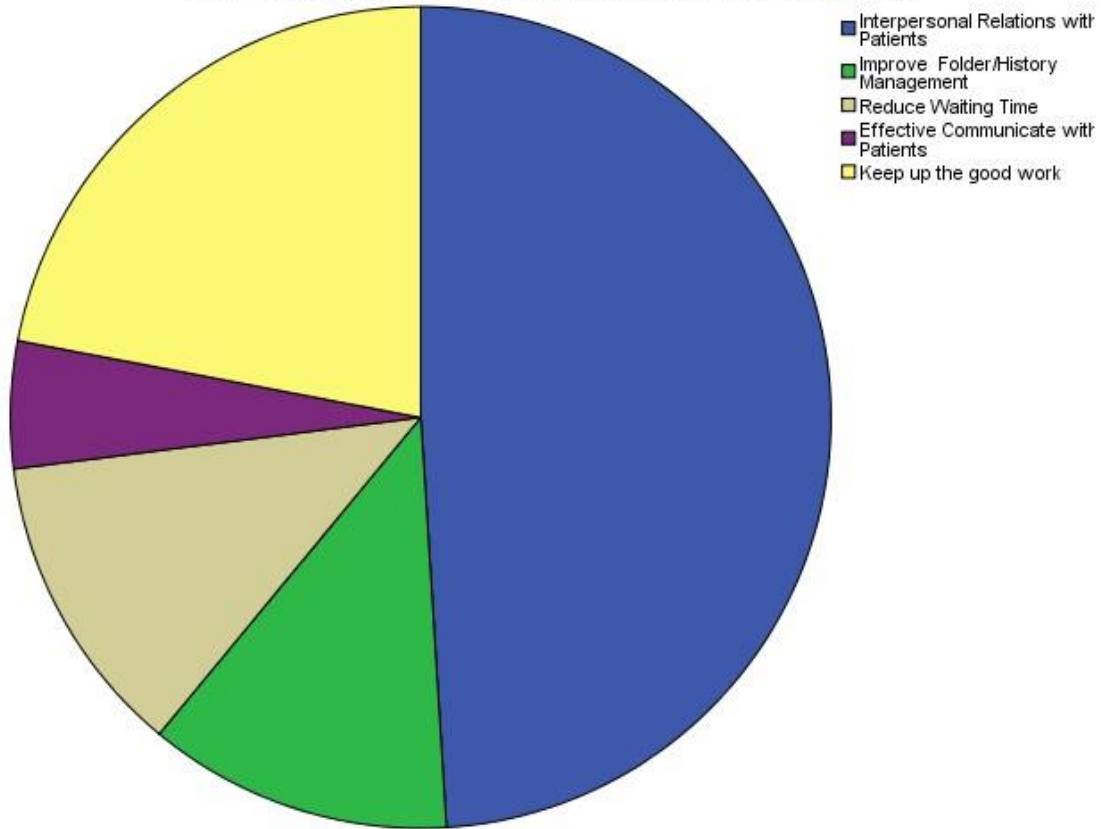
**i) Recommendations on how GARH can improve its image to the public**

**Table 4.2.10: Recommendations on how GARH can improve its image to the public**

Recommendations	Frequency	Valid Percent
Interpersonal Relations with Patients	49	49.0
Improve Folder/History Management	12	12.0
Reduce Waiting Time	12	12.0
Effective Communicate with Patients	5	5.0
Keep up the good work	22	22.0
Total	100	100.0

The respondents were asked to give recommendations on how the Greater Accra Regional Hospital can improve upon its image and hence from Table 4.2.10, 49% recommended that the staff (medical and non-medical) improve their interpersonal/human relations with the patients, 22% congratulated the hospital management on a good work done and suggested they keep up the good work. 12% suggested an improvement in the folder and history management of the patients. Another 12% suggested a reduction the waiting time and 5% suggested effective communication from the hospital staff on issues. This implied that clients/patients have a problem with both medical and non-medical staff as far as human/interpersonal relations is concerned at the hospital.

Recommendations on how GARH can improve its image



*Fig 4.2.10*

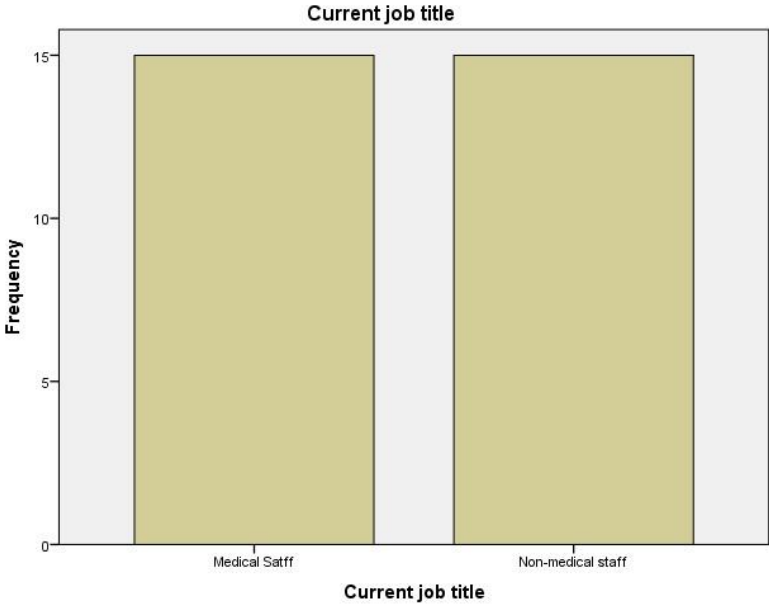
**4.3 Data Presentation and Analysis from Staff of the Greater Accra Regional Hospital**

**a) Distribution of Staff Respondents**

**Table 4.3.1: Distribution of Staff Respondents**

Staff	Frequency	Valid Percent
Medical Staff	15	50.0
Non-medical staff	15	50.0
Total	30	100.0

From Table 4.3.1, 30 staff were sampled, 15 were medical staff and the rest non-medical staff; representing 50% of each category.



**Fig 4.3.1**

## b) Induction Training Upon Employment

**Table 4.3.2: Induction Training Upon Employment**

Induction Training Upon Employment	Frequency	Valid Percent
YES	21	70.0
NO	9	30.0
Total	30	100.0

From Table 4.3.2, 70% of selected sample received an induction training upon employment at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital, whilst 30% answered negative implying they did not receive an induction training upon their appointment.



**Fig 4.3.2**

c) **How helpful is induction training to work?**

**Table 4.3.3: How helpful is induction training to work?**

How helpful is induction training to work	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly Disagree	3	10.0
Disagree	5	16.7
Not Sure	6	20.0
Agree	9	30.0
Strongly Agree	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

From Table 4.3.3 above, 30% of the staff sample selected 'agree' that the induction training they received assists in their line of duty. 23% 'strongly agree' whilst 20% are not 'not sure'. 16% 'disagree' whilst 10% 'strongly disagree'. Therefore it is clear more than of the sample selected (53%) agree the induction training is helpful in their line of duty.



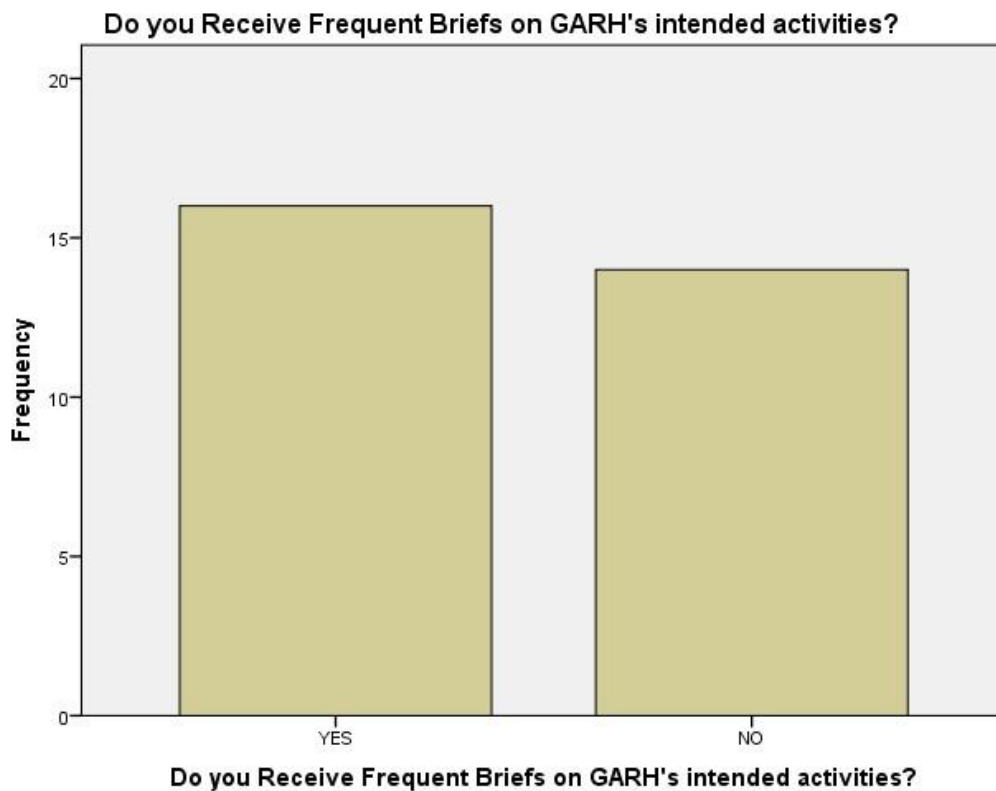
**Fig 4.3.3**

**d) Receipt of frequent briefs of hospital’s intended activities**

**Table 4.3.4: Receipt of frequent briefs of hospital’s intended activities**

Receipt of frequent briefs	Frequency	Valid Percent
YES	16	53.3
NO	14	46.7
Total	30	100.0

From Table 4.3.4 above, 53.3% out of 30 respondents answered YES to receiving frequent briefs on hospital’s intended activities whilst 14 representing 46.7% answered NO. Given the data, quite a considerable number receive frequent briefs on the hospital’s intended activities.



**Fig 4.3.4**

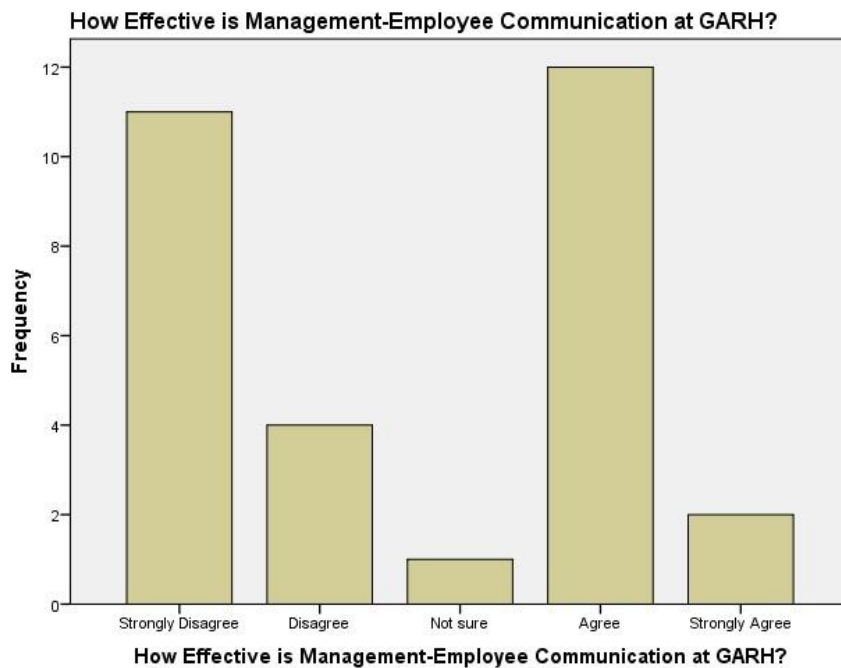
**e) Management-Employee Communication at GARH**

**Table 4.3.5: Management-Employee Communication at GARH**

Management-Employee Communication GARH	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly Disagree	11	36.7
Disagree	4	13.3
Not sure	1	3.3

Agree	12	40.0
Strongly Agree	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

From the table above, it shows 12 respondents representing 40% of the selected sample agree that management-employee communication is effective. 11 of them making up 36.7% however strongly disagree with the statement, while 4 representing 13.3% strongly disagree. 2, representing 6.7% strongly agree to the statement, whilst 1 person making up 3.3% is not sure. This clearly implies that quite a number agree that management-employee communication is effective. The paradox here is quite an equal amount think otherwise.



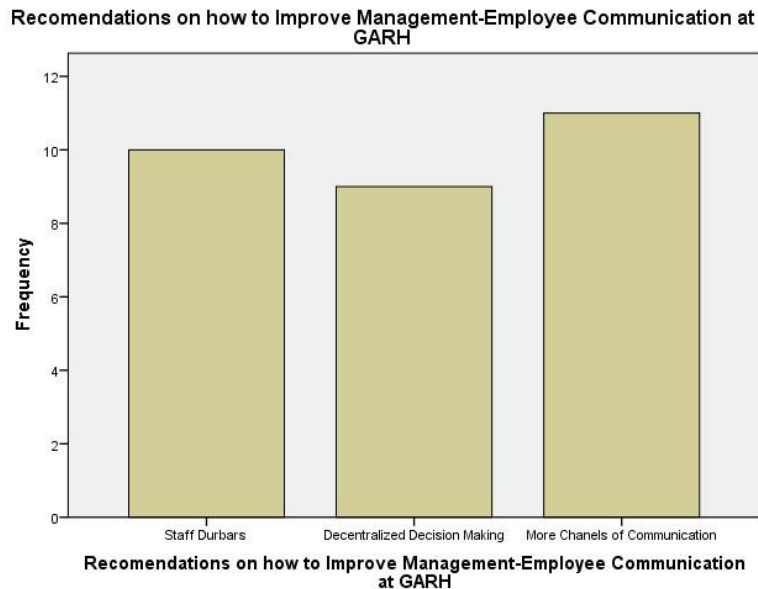
**Fig 4.3.5**

**f) Recommendations on how to Improve Management-Employee Communication**

**Table 4.3.6: Recommendations on how to Improve Management-Employee Communication**

Recommendations	Frequency	Valid Percent
Staff Durbars	10	33.3
Decentralized Decision Making	9	30.0
More Channels of Communication	11	36.7
Total	30	100.0

Table 4.3.6 above shows out of 30 staff sampled, 11 representing 36.7% suggest the Greater Accra Hospital increases channels of communication, whilst 10 representing 33.3% recommended staff durbars and 9 making up 30% push for a more decentralised decision making process.



**Fig 4.3.6**

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The study set out with the following specific objectives:

5. To find out whether the Greater Accra Regional Hospital has a Public Relations Department.
6. To explore whether the hospital employs professional Public Relations principles and strategies in its engagement with the public.
7. Ascertain whether or not PR tools or strategies are used at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital.
8. To establish the functions of PR at Greater Accra Regional Hospital

#### **5.1 Summary**

Public relations activities are aimed at carefully selected groups of people who are subdivisions of the greater general public (Jefkins 1998). At Greater Accra Regional Hospital, staff respondents indicated that the organization had put in place techniques to communicate with them. From the study, it was revealed that memos were the most preferred methods that management utilized in communicating to employees. Quite a number agreed that management-employee communication is effective.

Even though staff respondents indicated that they had received induction training upon employment, quite a number were not regularly briefed on the hospital's intended activities and changes. They were also not informed of the part they were to play in those activities and

changes. To promote a positive external PR, an organization must have a sound internal PR. Employees form the most important constituent of any organization and their goodwill is of paramount importance for the organization to succeed. Center and Jackson (2002) indicate that employees want to know the direction the organization is headed, why it is heading that way and the role they have to play towards that particular direction.

Staff respondents also indicated that the hospital conducts induction training to new employees. The purpose of these induction courses was to introduce the new employees to the organization's goals, values and vision. This view was verified by employees in the study sample who agreed that the induction courses they received assisted them in their work at the hospital.

The clients/patients who are the external publics of the hospital are informed through posters and pull up banners. They rely on receptionist/health information personnel, nurses, doctors, accounts personnel, security staff etc. for information about the hospital.

From the sampled clients who formed part of the study, Greater Accra Regional Hospital did not utilize the mass media (television, radio and newspapers) to make its presence known to the external publics. 39% of the sampled clients had heard about Greater Accra Regional Hospital from friends and relatives and 35% referrals from other hospitals.

The clients were also satisfied with the pace of treatment at the hospital. Staff that came into contact with the clients also lacked training in customer care. The clients who were sampled lamented about some of the nurses' behavior. 49% recommended an improvement in the interpersonal and human relations skills of medical staff especially nurses. They were generally satisfied with communication with non-medical staff (63%).

The Greater Accra Regional Hospital however, remained a favorite of the majority of the sampled clients since from the data gathered, 66% indicated that they would refer other people to the Greater Accra Regional Hospital. This meant that if PR was well organized and approached in a professional manner, the hospital would have improved its reputation and image and therefore it would have attracted a larger clientele.

According to the Excellence Theory, there are four features of effective public relations. They are;

5. **Empowerment of the public relations function:** effective organization must empower public relations as a critical management function
6. **Communicator roles:** let public relations executives play managerial role as well as administrative role
7. **Organization of communication function:** public relations should be an integrated communication function and separate from instead of being sublimated to marketing or other management functions
8. **Public relations models:** effective organization should base its internal and external communication and relationship building on a two-way symmetrical model.

From the findings however, Public Relations practice at the Greater Accra Regional Hospital is in sharp contrast with the excellence theory.

Systems theory also provides a useful theoretical underpinning for thinking about the role of PR since it notes that the wellbeing or otherwise of organizations is dependent on establishing and maintaining relationships both within itself and with its environment. However, at the

Greater Accra Regional Hospital, the parts of the system (hospital) are working but not coherent enough. Therefore, management must involve all parties both internal and external in order to be effective.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

From the findings, it was established that:

- The role of PR at the hospital was not well defined.
- Even though the hospital was involved in numerous PR activities, there lacked a PR department to sufficiently handle these activities.
- Without professional PR personnel at the hospital, the task of handling PR was left in the hands of individual managers responsible for an activity.
- These managers lacked capacity in PR management.
- PR was therefore disorganized, done in an ad hoc basis and haphazardly approached.
- The hospital lacked a PR plan and policy. Thus planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of PR activities were poorly done.
- With no established tools for monitoring and evaluation, the success of a PR activity was gauged by the number of complaints arising out of the activity.
- Even though the hospital was in constant touch with various publics, it lacked a communication strategy to reach out to these publics. This meant that the publics found it hard to understand the organization.
- PR played an important role in the management of Greater Accra Regional Hospital but it was not well defined and structured as a strategic management tool.

## **5.4 Suggestions for the Greater Accra Regional Hospital**

In order for Greater Accra Regional Hospital to remain relevant to its various publics, the following recommendations were made:

- There is an urgent need for Greater Accra Regional Hospital to establish a PR and Communication department. The department should be staffed with professional PR personnel to handle PR issues at the hospital.
- The department thus established will be headed by a Public Relations and Communications Director who will sit in management meetings and report directly to the Executive Director.
- The person will be the link between the organization and its various publics and will come up with a PR policy document to guide all PR activities at the organization.
- The department will carry out regular research (with help from the Research Unit) among the hospital's publics to determine the needs of these publics. It will also set up proper communication techniques for the success of the hospital's PR and communications campaigns.
- The department will be responsible for protecting and improving the hospital's image, identify PR challenges and look for opportunities that will create a niche for the hospital for the success of the organization.
- The department will plan, coordinate, direct, budget, monitor and evaluate all PR activities. These activities will have set objectives that tally with the hospital's vision and objectives.
- The department will be allocated a budget to implement its activities and the PR and Communications Director will be held accountable to this budget.

#### **5.4.1 Suggestions for Further Research**

This study should be replicated in private hospitals to study the role PR plays in the management of those hospitals since the Greater Accra Regional Hospital is a government hospital. Research should also be carried out to include a wider population using different instruments.

A comparative study on the role of PR in both government and private hospitals is highly recommended.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Employee Questionnaire

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SoGSAR)

Dear respondent, my name is Ruth Bazing, I am a student of the aforementioned institution undertaking a study on the “**Public Relations Practice in the Healthcare System in Ghana; A Case of Greater Accra Regional Hospital**”. The study is purely academic-oriented, and as such I would like to assure you that your responses will not be used for any other purpose other than those stated before. To complete the study, I humbly request that you complete this questionnaire.

Please tick where applicable.

#### SECTION A

1. What is your current job title \_\_\_\_\_

2. State the years you have worked for Greater Accra Regional Hospital? a) 0 -5

years ( )

b) 6-10 years ( )

c) 11-15 years ( )

d) 20 years and above ( )

3. Were you given an induction training upon your employment?

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

4. Do you agree that the induction training you received assist you in your work at the hospital?

a) Strongly Disagree ( )

b) Disagree ( )

c) Not sure ( )

d) Agree ( )

e) Strongly Agree ( )

5. As an employee, do you receive frequent briefs on hospitals intended activities and changes, and the part you will play in them?

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

6. Do you agree that management-employee communication at the hospital is effective?

a) Strongly Disagree ( )

b) Disagree ( )

c) Not sure ( )

d) Agree ( )

e) Strongly Agree ( )

7. What methods do you think will improve management-employee communication at the hospital?

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.....  
.....

## **SECTION B**

### **DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

Please tick where appropriate (✓)

8. What is your Sex?

- a) Male
- b) Female

9. What is your age?

- a) Below 20
- b) 20-40
- c) 40-60
- d) Above 60

10. What is the highest level of education you attained?

- a) No schooling at all
- b) Primary
- c) Junior high School
- d) Senior High School /Advance level
- e) College/University

## Appendix B

### Clients/Patients Questionnaire

#### GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

#### SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SoGSAR)

Dear respondent, my name is Ruth Bazing, I am a student of the aforementioned institution undertaking a study on the “**Public Relations Practice in the Healthcare System in Ghana; A Case of Greater Accra Regional Hospital**”. The study is purely academic-oriented, and as such I would like to assure you that your responses will not be used for any other purpose other than those stated before. To complete the study, I humbly request that you complete this questionnaire.

Please tick where applicable.

### SECTION A

1. How did you come to know about Greater Accra Regional Hospital (Ridge Hospital)?
  - a. Friends/ relatives ( )
  - b. Referred from another hospital ( )
  - c. Media ( )
  - d. Other sources (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

2. How would you rate the following services at the hospital?

#### RECEPTION

- a) Very satisfactory

- b) Satisfactory
- c) Dissatisfactory
- d) Very Dissatisfactory

COMMUNICATION WITH MEDICAL STAFF

- a) Very satisfactory
- b) Satisfactory
- c) Dissatisfactory
- d) Very Dissatisfactory

COMMUNICATION WITH NON-MEDICAL STAFF

- a) Very satisfactory
- b) Satisfactory
- c) Dissatisfactory
- d) Very Dissatisfactory

TIMELINESS

- a) Very satisfactory
- b) Satisfactory
- c) Dissatisfactory
- d) Very Dissatisfactory

3. Have you been a patient in another hospital before?

- a. Yes ( )
- b. No ( )

4. If the answer to 11 above is yes, how would you rate Greater Accra Regional Hospital with the other hospital?

- a. Poor ( )

b. Average ( )

c. Excellent ( )

5. If you were to refer a person to a hospital, would you refer them to Greater Accra Regional Hospital?

a. Yes ( )

b. No ( )

6. Give your general recommendation on how the Greater Accra Regional Hospital can improve its image to patients

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.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**SECTION B**

**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

Please tick where appropriate (√) 1)

What is your Sex?

a) Male

b) Female

2) What is your age?

a) Below 20

b) 20-40

c) 40-60

d) Above 60

3) Marital status

a) Single

b) Married

c) Divorced

d) Widowed

4) What is the highest level of education you attained?

a) No schooling at all

b) Primary

c) Junior high School

d) Senior High School /Advance level

College/University