

Background: Orthopedics, or orthopedic services, refers to the medical specialty which involves treatment of the musculoskeletal system, which is typically made up of the bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, and muscles. Musculoskeletal injuries include sprains and strains, usually incurred during sudden movement or excessive use like fractures, open wounds cuts and punctures, contusions and bruises.

Problem statement; Patients with musculoskeletal injuries in Uganda frequently fail to receive immediate care due to inadequate resources and most are treated by traditional bonesetters. Delay in diagnosis and start of effective treatment is very common and an important risk factor for disability and deformity in musculoskeletal injury.

Objective; This study aimed at assessing the factors associated with delay in seeking hospital based orthopedic services among musculoskeletal injury patients at Rubaga hospital so that intervention strategies can be designed to improve early management of the conditions.

Methods; A descriptive cross sectional design was used to describe and document aspects of utilization of orthopedic services. The study population comprised of orthopedic patients seeking services from Rubaga hospital. This study used purposive sampling to obtain the participants. The methods of data collection which were used in this study included Interviews and focus Group Discussions.

Results; Fractures 72 (54.5%), dislocations 27 (20.5%), abrasions 35 (26.5%) and lacerations 58 (43.9%) were among the outstanding musculoskeletal injuries among the patients/respondents. About 55% of the total respondents spent more than 24 hours before seeking hospital based orthopedic services since the injury occurred. The socio demographic factors which had a statistically significant influence on delay to seek hospital based orthopedic services at Rubaga hospital where age ($p = 0.04$), marital status ($p=0.048$), number of people in the household where the patients came from ($p = 0.042$), education level ($p= 0.013$), relationship of the patient to the household head ($p = 0.026$), and the employment status ($p = 0.008$). The institutional factors which had a significant influence on time taken to seek the services were the health worker attitudes, cost

of services, the fear of pain inflicted by health workers, distance to the hospital, and the waiting times to get services at the hospitals.

Conclusion; Delay in seeking orthopedic services is still a problem at hospital level. This is evident by the number of patients with musculoskeletal injuries that reported after more than 24 hours of acquiring the injuries to the hospital (55%).

Recommendations; The public must be enlightened on the dangers associated with patronizing traditional bone setters with their attendant complications. Hospital healthcare services should be made affordable and accessible to prevent delays and aid quicker attention which may reduce the rate of —leaving hospitals to the traditional bone centers against medical advice.