

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, health workers have shown a growing interest in the heavy users of medical care. Of the heavy users of health services, Zook and Moore considered those patients with prolonged hospitalization and patients with repeated hospitalization for the same disease, defined as more than one admission falling in the same diagnostic classification.⁽¹⁾

Life table is a set of statistics used to estimate probabilities associated with the risk of an event during a certain period of time.⁽²⁾ This event may be death, *readmission to hospital*, coronary heart attack, and so on.⁽³⁾ Life table method has specifically been applied to psychiatric illnesses as they are chronic diseases characterized by multiple spells of hospital admission.^(4,5) In such illnesses, it is important to determine not only the probability of recovery within specified interval after first diagnosis or admission to care, but also the probability of recurrence or readmission particularly in relation to the duration of first episode.⁽⁶⁾

Studies of psychiatric recidivism have generally reported discouraging results, up to 50% of discharged patients being rehospitalized within a year after discharge.^(7,8)

In a study of psychiatric patients admitted for hospitalization in Jerusalem, it was found that the median length of stay for first admitted patients was 51.5 days and twelve months after admission, 8.2% of patients still remained hospitalised.⁽⁹⁾

Factors that have influenced patterns of chronicity and readmission among psychiatric patients in the past and present will continue to do so in more or less the same manner in the future. Both life table techniques and time series analysis can identify and isolate such influencing factors for predictive (forecasting) purposes as well as for administrative planning and control.⁽¹⁰⁾