

Editorial

Professional Management of Health Care Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Health care sector is the most dynamic and evolving field in the country today. Health care organizations are gradually expanding in both public as well as private sector. Indian health care delivery system is categorized into two major components—public and private. The government, i.e., public health care system comprises of primary, secondary, and tertiary care institutions. The private sector also augments the facilities by providing health care facilities at various strata of Indian society.

In India, most of the health care service providers are organizations run by individuals or small nursing homes run by individual or group of doctors. These personnel are not adequately trained in the field of hospital administration. Despite numerous growth potential, the hospital industry faces multiple challenges owing to being managed by ill-trained personnel.

CHALLENGE OF MANAGING HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Along with all this comes the inherent challenge of managing the expanding health care organizations. It is very important to understand why trained health care professionals are needed to manage the health care organizations. It is paradoxical that persons by virtue of their seniority hold top positions in such organizations in age and service without any frank exposure to formal training in health care management and administration, viz. directors, medical superintendents, and so on. These professionals have no knowledge of human resource management, inventory and logistic management, best procurement practices, legal, and ethical issues, and financial management. It is relevant that 204 laws are applicable to hospitals right from commissioning to day-to-day operations and if the concerned personnel lacks the basic knowledge then it would be a herculean task to handle the hospital affairs.

Health care professionals who have an in-depth knowledge of dynamic environment of health care is the need of the hour. These professionals have a cutting edge over others due to their inherent knowledge and foresight of how actually intangibles can compromise the delivery facet. The novelty of Indian health care system lies in the fact that still more than 80% health care expenditure is out of the pocket. Hence, it is imperative that experts with basic foundation of health care administration are allowed to manage the already decompensated ecosystem.

In India, there is a huge rural urban divide and inequitable distribution of resources. There is a need of 3 million more hospital beds to match the global average of 3 beds per 1000 population and an additional 700,000 doctors will be required by 2025 to reach a ratio of one medical doctor per 1,000 individuals.

The various important issues which need the active involvement of trained professionals to plan the organizations are as follows:

Trained manpower: A major challenge for our nation and the health care industry would be not only to retain the health care workforce but also to attract the best talent to work in Tier II cities and rural areas. The foremost amidst them is the availability of health care professionals. As per the 12th 5-year plan document, the country faces a shortage of physicians and nurses. Despite the steps to increase number of colleges and training institutes, the number of such professionals is the issue, which needs to be addressed.

Health care technology: Latest advance in information technology needs to be utilized to make hospitals paperless and seamless job arenas. Telemedicine and information technology have progressed by leaps and bounds to be an integral part of health care delivery. India's medical device market worth is about \$2.5 billion. The current annual growth rate for the medical device sector is more than 6%. Some innovative technologies like radiofrequency identification, barcode, smart cards, dictaphones, and speech-to-text software have been the driving forces of innovations in health care. Innovations have made day-to-day functioning much more easy.

Accreditation and quality: Accreditation and assessment of health care institutions have been recognized as the quality ensuring mechanism. The criteria for assessment must be relevant, understandable, measurable, and achievable. Accreditation aids in establishing standards, measuring performance, and in identifying areas of improvement.

Accreditation of health care delivery places like hospitals and laboratories are helping in medical tourism. Now is the time to share progress, challenges and best practices to enable interoperability and link the ecosystem in the delivery of better quality care. The growing demand for quality health care and the absence of matching delivery mechanism pose a great challenge.

Teaching faculty: There is an acute shortage of faculty of medical teachers all over the country. One of the pivotal factors to sustain the projected growth of the health care industry in India would be the availability of a trained workforce, besides cheaper technology, better infrastructure, and so on.

Patient safety: Patient safety is a new health discipline that emphasizes the reporting, analysis, and prevention of medical error that often leads to adverse health care events. The patient safety knowledge helps in changing the processes to make hospitals safe for patients.

Facility management: There is a lot of emphasis on facility management. It encompasses all the various systems that need to be put in place so as to utilize the infrastructure and equipment that are being installed in any health care set up. Presently, the availability of trained manpower is very difficult; thus, facility management helps us to plan and foresee these needs well in time.

Cost containment: Cost containment in hospitals can be defined as the conscious activities and policies, processes and norms adopted for reducing the cost without compromising the outcome and quality of care. In today's health care scenario, health care expenditure even in developed countries has increased by 5 to 7% of gross domestic product. Per capita cost of health care has similarly increased. Elderly representing 11% use about 30% of health care costs. In this dynamic environment, it is imperative that cost containment is one of the major drivers for health care industry to grow further.

Various operational research tools, such as cost-benefit analysis, program evaluation and review technique, break-even analysis, and operational audits are some of the methods to monitor cost containment. Thus, cost containment policies in the health sector do not mean cuts in health expenses, but rational and efficient allocation of scarce resources.

Marketing and branding: Every hospital should have a mission statement and vision statement. They should position themselves with certain niche areas as their prime deliverables. This will help them stand out. Every hospital epitomizes a brand value either low cost care or specialized services. It is of essential importance that everyone on staff---from the CEO to the volunteer at the reception desk should communicate the organization's mission effectively. The result is a brand-guided organization.

A favorable hospital brand image stimulates patient loyalty directly and also enhances patient satisfaction through the improvement of service quality, which in turn promotes the revisiting intention of patients.

Medical tourism: The Indian medical tourism industry is pegged at US\$ 3 billion per annum, with tourist arrivals estimated at 230,000. The Indian medical tourism industry is expected to reach US\$ 6 billion by 2018, with the number of people arriving in the country for medical treatment set to double over the next 4 years. With greater number of hospitals getting accredited and receiving recognition, and greater awareness on the need to develop their quality to meet the requirements.

India is one of the top global health care destinations because the expertise of doctors is at par with the best clinicians across the globe, health infrastructure is excellent and latest technology is available across the country. Medical tourism is sustainable in India because of the necessity and the waiting period, i.e., there abroad. It is right time that this window be utilized for maximum boost to our Health sector.

Health insurance: Health insurance in India is expanding. It is important that at this stage professionals ensure regulations and monitoring of this sector. Government is also stressing on the need for wide insurance cover, as the out of pocket expenditure is maximum for Indians. Health sector policy formulation, assessment, and implementation is an extremely complex task especially in a changing epidemiological, institutional, technological, and political scenario. Proper understanding of the Indian health situation and application of the principles of insurance keeping in view the social realities and national objective are important.

Legal issues: Contemporary legal issues like CPA, right to information, and so on are now prevalent on the decision making process of health care ecosystem. The health organizations have to keep themselves abreast to handle these issues, which keep on coming more frequently now. Patient grievances have to be addressed on priority and with compassion. Hence, professional administrators who are qualified have a better insight into handling legal nuances.

Citizen's charter: It is imperative that every hospital should have a citizen's charter depicting the rights of a patient and responsibilities. This will help the hospitals create awareness about the various issues and will make the society a part of health care delivery.

NEED OF THE HOUR

Thus, it is important that health care organizations up to district level are managed by trained hospital administrators. We have to understand that resources in terms of money, manpower, and materials are limited, whereas the demand for the same is increasing day by day in any health care set up. A professionally trained administrator can utilize these resources optimally and efficiently. The basic principle of economics has to be the guiding beacon for any health care organization "Stretching limited means to meet unlimited ends."

Expert health care professionals also have the ability to present convincingly to individuals and group the evidence to support a point of and scientific interpretation of data augmenting the strengths and developmental needs of the health ecosystem in totality. A professional administrator with multidisciplinary training would ensure the optimal use of resources. This is a technology-driven era; hence, professional experts are better placed to charter the course of successful health care delivery. Presently, SMART hospitals and SMART health care is the order of the day. The concept of smart hospital has been designed to achieve safety, clinical quality, productivity, service excellence, and optimal integration of technologies. "Internet of things" and mobile health care delivery will boost up the technology-driven health care. The central government of India has prepared a blueprint for the development of SMART cities in the country. With the advent of SMART cities in our country, SMART hospitals will synergize the efforts of delivery of holistic health care.

Better management or lack of it will determine the future of health service. Hence, it is best to leave the expert delivery to domain experts of health care. Hospitals of tomorrow should be IT-enabled, flexible, paperless, filmless, and green hospitals. These hospitals will be boundary less and will aim for optimal conservation of resources. Healing architecture and esthetic design will make hospitals more a temple of healing than a corporate structure. Hence, it is prudent that trained hospital administrators are handed over the reins of Indian health care system.

Dr Shakti Kumar Gupta

Medical Superintendent

Dr. R.P. Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences

AIIMS, New Delhi, India

Brig (Dr) Sunil Kant, VSM

Professor and Head

Department of Hospital Administration

Armed Forces Medical College

Pune, Maharashtra, India