

Role of Corporate Hospitals in the Development of Health Care in Bangladesh

In the Constitution of Bangladesh, health is a state subject. Traditionally healthcare in Bangladesh has been the purview of the state. The concept has social and political background. Although majority of patients in Bangladesh are going to private health care providers (traditional healers, homeopaths, religious pirs etc), the idea of paying for treatment in a hospital has been scorned down by the population as a whole. But technological advances in the field of medical sciences have outstripped our social, economic and political policies. Over the years, hospitals have evolved from being small, autonomous, independent institutions to highly complex organizations that use sophisticated technology in the provision of lifesaving care. With the availability of internet, the population is now aware of the latest health care technologies and the community demand availability of these newer capabilities in the hospital and health service system. The resource crunch of the government led to the reliance on the private sector. Other factors that led to the loss of confidence on the public sector hospitals by the population are; lack of properly trained staff and skill development, poor management and lack of accountability, combined with long wait, lack of privacy, mechanized behavior and lack of responsiveness by care providers. As a result there had been gradual entry of the private hospitals in the health care arena of Bangladesh. Starting from early 1980s numerous small hospitals or “clinics” as these were called were established. But these clinics, although forming the backbone of health care in Bangladesh in the 80s and 90s lacked the financial resources to tap the latest technology in health care. These were also run on individual codes and practices of the owners and lacked in the modern aspects of health care.

In the last decade there has been an upswing of the purchasing power of the community and with that a greater emphasis in health care expenditure. With economic power came more and more dominance by consumers rather than providers in medical practice. Patient migration to nearby countries had also increased. Several surveys point to the fact that many of these patients are ready to rely on the competence of the local doctors but are unhappy with local hospitals. Hence the need for hospital services for quality medical care at the community level was gaining momentum. In 2005, Apollo Hospitals Dhaka was established, followed by several other corporate hospitals. Corporate hospitals have affected the health care scenario in several ways despite the initial antagonism. Overall standard of healthcare has been elevated to a higher level as the consumers can now compare. International standards have been achieved as evident by accreditation of Apollo Hospitals by the Joint Commission International (JCI), the international arm of the Joint Commission—an independent nonprofit that certifies the quality of more than 20,000 health care organizations in the U.S. Apollo Hospitals Dhaka has recorded equivalent outcomes to the international standards for medical complications associated with knee, coronary, and prostate surgery as well as for infections related to the operating theater and catheters. Fragmented nature of healthcare delivery in most private hospitals are now a thing of the past, as corporate hospitals have introduced a holistic approach and provides all services under one roof. More over, corporate hospitals have put emphasis on quality control, patient safety standards, and privacy & confidentiality practices. These hospitals also established clinical audit, case management practices like clinical pathways system and ethics committee, patient education practices, patient satisfaction surveys and complaint handling procedures. Along with the clinical advancements,

corporate hospitals have introduced world class services in the fields of house keeping and food & beverages.

Corporate hospitals have introduced another aspect that was unknown in Bangladesh health care system. In majority of the hospitals, administration is by practicing medical professionals who are not trained to meet the newer challenges. These administrators have a role conflict between the practice of medicine and the practice of administration & this has led to short comings in the delivery of health services. Administrators in corporate hospitals are executive leaders specially trained for the management of an organized group of health care providers, trained in resource generation at the local level, and are expected to effectively utilize, men, money, material at his/her disposal to achieve the objectives set by the policy makers.

Corporate hospital is now a major player in healthcare in Bangladesh. An effective integration of private public partnership, community aspirations, social responsibilities and above all the health care delivery expertise of the corporate hospitals will take us to a newer height in the coming days.

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