



Why keep them out?

The govt is not letting private hospitals help with swine flu treatment. The latter say they could've been of help

Team Mid DAY

FOR once, well-equipped private healthcare centres in the country are being forced to sit it out as government hospitals get their acts together to tackle the swine flu pandemic. The reason, as Delhi Health Minister Kiran Walia, explained is to stay above the situation.

"The main purpose is to monitor the treatment of patients and procedures very carefully so as to check further spread of the pandemic. Also, if only government hospitals are involved, it will be easier for us to maintain centralised records," said Walia.

Though there are no plans to rope in private hospitals, 11 more government hospitals are to be included in the loop in Delhi alone. These include both the centrally and state-run hospitals.

'Give us a chance'

However, private hospitals argue government facilities may not be adequate to handle a serious situation and say that they too want to help.

"We are equally capable of dealing with the influenza and we will be happy to pitch in whenever we are asked to do so," said Parwez Ahmad, CEO, Max Healthcare. But he added that in April this year, the hospital had requested a supply of Tamiflu, but was denied.

Hospital heartbreak

Rajkumar Davani, a businessman from Bhopal, regrets having extended his holiday by a day. On their way back from a weeklong vacation to Bangkok, Phuket and Pataya, Davani's 12-year-old daughter Prakruti was quarantined at the Mumbai airport after she showed symptoms of swine flu.

On June 15, the Davanis landed in Mumbai and were supposed to leave for Bhopal the same day. But the girl was admitted at Kasturba Hospital. "They were to return on June 14, but wanted to stay a day more in Pataya," said Ravi Navlani, owner of Travel Solutions, Indore, the agent who had booked the trip. "Davani wanted to leave Mumbai immediately. But his daughter was not allowed to leave the hospital, as her test reports are awaited," said Navlani.



REPRESENTATION PIC

Dr Sujata Malik, medical superintendent, Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune, said, "The government is not keeping us updated about the flu, but we get information on our own. We were invited for a meeting where government and private hospitals had come together to discuss ways to prevent the spread of the flu."

All private healthcare units have been directed to transfer suspected cases of swine flu to selected isolation centres in government hospitals.

Dr Prasad R Muglikar, medical superintendent, Jehangir Hospital, Pune said, "We received about five patients with flu-like symptoms. We immediately sent them to the quarantine department and after investigation directed them to the Infectious Diseases Hospital, as that's what the government asked us to do."

Private initiative

While the government is not encouraging it, many people are rushing to private hospitals for check-ups. At the travel clinic of Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Andheri, doctors have been fielding calls from worried vacationers who have returned to the city. "Over the last week, we've had people who have been traveling abroad coming in with flu symptoms," said Dr Tanu Singhal, head of the clinic.