

Express Newsline

Delhi hospitals roll out red carpet for Afghan

Date: 31-05-2010 | Edition: Delhi | Page: 1 | Source: vidya krishnan | Clip size (cm): W: 24 H: 10

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CITY ANCHOR

LINE UP INTERPRETERS, SPECIAL DESKS AND EVEN FOOD FOR THOSE COMING FOR TREATMENT FROM THE V

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VIDYA KRISHNAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

LAST Thursday, 62-year-old Nadeebullah from Kandahar checked into a city hospital, anxious about the impending double valve replacement surgery and intimidated by the plush hospital in an alien country.

But his fears were unfounded, as hospitals in Delhi have been going out of the way to make Afghan patients feel at home. From translating in-patient documents into Pashto and Dari to hiring full-time interpreters and setting up separate desks, hospitals

across the city are rolling out the red carpet for patients from the war-torn country. And it makes good business sense too, as they make up a major chunk of medical tourists to the Capital, followed by Iraq and Nigeria.

Indraprastha Apollo Hospital has an 'Afghan desk' to help patients check-in. Last year, Apollo hospitals saw over 1,500 Afghan patients and they are now even planning to put up signages in Pashto to assist the patients.

Similarly, Max Healthcare too has designated resources for patients from Afghanistan. "We have hired on-call interpreters for those

who do not know English and Urdu. We will soon be translating all in-house documents, guides and patient records into Pashto and Dari for these patients. We are also looking at putting up signages, if needed," said Hari Khubchandani, head of Max Healthcare's international patient services.

For Westerners, Indian hospitals might offer a cheaper alternative, but for those from Afghanistan India is their only option for reliable medical care. "In my country, most hospitals do not have computerised scanners and even facilities like dialysis are difficult to access on a regular basis. This is why most



A help desk at Apollo Hospital.

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WAR-TORN COUNTRY

patients

Afghans prefer to come to India. It is not exactly affordable for us, but this is the closest we get to reliable medical facilities," says Nadeebullah. In Kabul, complicated procedures to treat cardiovascular diseases, cancers or renal diseases are still not available, he adds.

According to Max Healthcare, Afghans form nearly 30 per cent of their international clientele. Out of the 4,000 international patients who came to Max Healthcare last year, nearly 1,000 were from Afghanistan. "We have also made arrangement for Afghans to get their food in our hospitals," added Khubchandani.