Day care clinic vs hospital: The consumer shift

The healthcare expenses are rising and economic instability has its serious impact on the population. In this situation, it is important that a good day care centre be established in the city to provide desired assistance to the public. Do the current times demand proliferation of these centres? Experts opine.

Anubhav Sharma

The goals of a day care clinic are to improve employee health and wellbeing, reduce health care expenditures, and to provide excellence in service delivery, efficiencies and comfort to patients. The cost of procedures performed in a day care centre is substantially lower when compared to a general hospital, which is mainly due to the difference in infrastructure and staffing requirements. Theatre complexes are equipped for more complex types of surgery such as heart surgery, orthopaedic surgery and many more, when compared to day care clinics. Private patients find day care clinics more affordable.

The treatment procedures at clinics are performed on the same day and do not require overnight stay. This in turn offers more predictability in the planning. It is extremely convenient for the children and the elderly as they do not have to sleep in an unfamiliar environment. Day care clinic treatments effectively reduce anxiety, which is normally associated when undergoing surgical procedures. It is the ideal way to avoid disruption at work or home.

As Dr Amit A Saraf, MD, FCPS, Consultant Physician (Internal Medicine), DNB Medicine Coordinator, Jupiter Hospitals points out, a specialist day care clinic is the one wherein specialty treatment is given to the patient and the patient is discharged the same day. The primary driver for this trend is the cost factor.

Short-stay day care centres are less capital-intensive when compared to the traditional healthcare hospitals. However, they do not offer high-end tertiary care and also few beds are required. Hence, they facilitate quick discharge and faster asset turnaround.

The day care speciality clinics should not be confused with local clinics operated by neighbourhood doctors. To create a differentiation with the local clinics, the hospital chains are equipping these clinics with a range of super speciality healthcare services that include consultation with specialists and super specialists, comprehensive diagnostic services and a range of preventive health check packages and pharmacy.

Dr Amit A Saraf

Standalone super speciality day care centres are definitely here to stay. With the evolution of medical technology, availability of skilled consultants, trained medical manpower and improved commuting facilities at least in major tier-I and tier-II cities, there is a trend towards establishing day care centres for patients to simply walk in and walk out within hours of completing the procedure. The space crunch in major cities has also led to more speciality day care facilities. Possibly in future, hospitals will be used mostly for admitting acute or emergency cases or be used by patients who need conventional (or open) surgery.

In certain specialities like ophthalmology, gastroenterology, chemotherapy, nephrology especially dialysis etc, the procedures are of a shorter duration and do not require prolonged stay in the hospital. Earlier patients were required to stay overnight, ie, at least 24 hours in the hospital for getting an approval from the Third-Party Administrator (TPA) or the insurance company. However, now even the insurance companies have accepted day care procedures in their packages.