The Multi-Faceted Challenges of the Healthcare Industry

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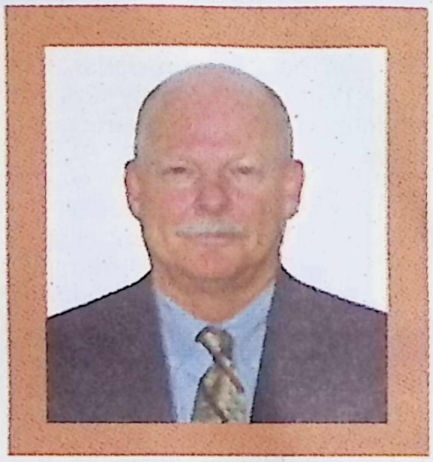
THE word 'hospital' inevitable conjures up images of doctors and nurses running frantically all over the place, while a man's life hangs on the balance (specially if you have been watching 'House' a bit too much). But are career opportunities in the medical industry only limited to clinical professions? What are the unique challenges that a hospital administration has to face? To give our readers a glimpse of the magnitude and intricacy of the tasks involved in the management of a corporate hospital, Star Campus consulted Mr. Edwin Lee Hanson, Chief Executive Officer, Apollo Hospitals Dhaka.

Mr. Hansen, who has been a healthcare executive for more than twenty-three years, reveals that the most challenging aspect of his position is to protect the shareholder's interest and the interest of the patients simultaneously. Whereas most of the government and teaching hospitals have healthcare as their sole focus, for-profit corporate hospitals have to carry out the dual mandate of balancing the requirements of both the shareholders and patients.

If further evidence was needed regarding the complexities of running a hospital, Mr. Hansen cites a research that was carried out in USA about ten years ago to identify the most complex business organizations that exist. Not surprisingly, hospitals were at the very top of that list. This is because a hospital is a myriad combination of 150 different kinds of jobs stretched over five operational units. These units are the Service Delivery system, Human Resource Management, Support Service System, IT Technology System and the Administration. And if anyone who is not studying in a medical college was wondering whether he can get a job in a hospital, Mr. Hansen highlights the fact that only the first unit relates to clinical professions. All of the different responsibilities that exist within a hospital require focused expertise, and have the potential to create an explosion of job opportunities for university students of different disciples in Bangladesh.

At the same time, Mr. Hansen points out the lack of a fairly deep human resource pool when it comes to getting the right people for the right job for a for-profit corporate hospital in Bangladesh. Because of being accustomed to the bureaucratic model of public/teaching hospitals, many people find it very hard to adjust to the autonomous environment of private up-scale hospitals dedicated to bottom-line performance. The important implication of this is that the hospitals not only need to hire the people for the work; but also need to train them to do the work.

So what does it need for a person to survive, and even excel in his career in this dynamic and relentlessly evolving environment of corporate hospitals that he may never have confronted in his life? For one thing, he/she needs to be self-motivated to learn to play the game. Mr. Hansen asserts that he constantly exhorts his staff to browse the net and emulate the practices of other world-class hospitals. He believes that a person aspiring to build his career in the medical industry needs to be innovative and ready to embrace opportunities inherent in change. He/she needs to bring lots of energy and enthusiasm to the workplace. 'You have got to be excited about coming to work,' exclaimed Mr. Hansen as he explained how challenges should invigorate people to spur on to greater heights. And challenges are abundant in a hospital, where split-second decisions made at a break-neck speed can have sweeping consequences.



In recent times, medical tourism has become a buzzword in the healthcare industry of Bangladesh. Mr. Hansen however cautions that medical tourism not consist of just a drop-in package, it is an evolved product. A lot has to happen in Bangladesh beyond just providing clinical service at competitive prices for this sector to flourish. The infrastructure for tourism, transportation system, hotels and entertainment options need to be upgraded to fully utilize the opportunities of medical tourism in Bangladesh. Explaining how the healthcare industry of Bangkok thrived on tourist attractions like shopping and luxurious hotels, Mr. Hansen says that medical tourism is not something that will explode onto the scene in Bangladesh by 2009, but will require more time.

Mr. Hansen believes that the healthcare industry in Bangladesh will rapidly advance over the next decade or so, and will have the potential to drive economic change in the country. Ultimately, the management processes adopted by corporate hospitals will help to improve the clinical, managerial and procurement efficiencies of all the healthcare service providers in Bangladesh, whether private or public.