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Fortis La Femme, New Delhi & Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurgaon :

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Some hospitals beat 5-star hotels in luxury, and tariffs

John Sarkar | TNN

New Delhi: In some Indian hospitals, when a wealthy patient calls in sick, it isn't enough to plop him on a king-size bed and get a bevy of your good doctors to fuss over him. Medical care across the country is going extreme.

Starting with room tariffs that can put the best luxury hotels to shame, private hospitals are adopting the best practices in hospitality to satisfy the whims of the truly demanding. For instance, some hospitals provide pick up and drop for patients in luxury cars. Others whip up gourmet fare for those who are fussy about their meals. Some even take a huge leap of faith and play the Gayatri mantra in the labour room while a baby is being born.

And there is a veritable technology arms race, with Wi-Fi-enabled suites, extra-large LED TV sets and ultramodern gadgets all vying for the attention of an unwell CEO, a Mahesh



minister, or just someone with a packed wallet who would want to run his office from the superlative comfort of his hospital room. The Apollo Hospitals Group, for instance, has a few Rs 30,000-a-night suites

that can house the patient and his entourage in luxury with interpreters, personal attendants, a well-stocked pantry and the works.

Similarly, a suite in Fortis La Femme in South Delhi will set one back by around Rs 37,000 for one night. At that price, one can stay at The Oberoi, New Delhi, for two nights. A presidential suite in Mumbai's Hiranandani Hospital costs Rs 30,000. Seven Hills Hospital, where Bollywood actor Aishwarya Rai Bachchan gave birth to her child, charges Rs 20,000 for a suite. And the tariffs don't include medical charges. A two-day all-inclusive childbirth package at Fortis La Femme can go up to Rs 4.5 lakh.

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Luxury hospitals mkt in nascent stage: Experts

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New Delhi: Some Indian hospitals are going all out to woo their wealthy clientele by adopting hospitality industry best practices and offering services that would put luxury hotels to shame.

Says Dr Anupam Sibal, group medical director of The Apollo Hospitals Group, "Look at it this way. We cater to patients from different parts of the world and they would have very unique tastes. We can't be serving South Indian food to somebody from Moscow or for that matter Mozambique. Similarly, for a Mongolian patient, we have to arrange an interpreter. It's a different matter that getting interpreters who speak Mongolian is very challenging."

The challenge doesn't end there. Apart from helping outstation patients book hotels for relatives, some hospitals also go out of their way to take care of their diverse religious needs. "Healing and faith go hand in hand," says Sibal. "If a patient wants to pray in a Russian orthodox church or in a synagogue, we try to get that arranged as well."

Contrary to the elite image of these hospitals, it is actually the low cost of treatments here that is helping them rake in foreign patients. "A liver transplant in the US costs Rs 2 crore. We do it for Rs 30 lakh and that includes airfare," says Sibal. According to him, the number of foreign patients opting for organ transplants in Apollo is increasing at the rate of 20% every year.

"It's not like 10-15 years ago when you had to go to a hospital and wait for the doctor. Expectations of people have changed. Some facilities that we offer are best in the world," says Dr Dilpreet Brar, regional director of Fortis Memorial Research Institute in Gurgaon. "Now, it's also imperative for us to take care of the needs of the patient's family." Read: movie theatres, food courts, spas, gyms and even a glitzy shopping arcade.

However, experts say that luxury medical services in India are in a nascent stage when compared to the US or the Middle East where one comes across 5-star hospitals or complete floors dedicated to luxury treatments. "Medical practices are getting globally standardized and India is adopting these at a quick pace," says Amit Mookim, head of healthcare at market research firm KPMG in India. "However, it's a small market and price points are big impediments for it to percolate down to the masses."

In hindsight, if one has the dough, it would seem that falling sick these days could make for memorable dinner table conversations.