

Matching patients with the right doctor - a success story from India

Indiritta Singh D'mello

Hospital Guide



Jyoti Goel, resident of Bordui village in Assam's Tinsukia district in India did not know where to go when she discovered her three month old child was born with two serious conditions-- a hole in the heart and Down Syndrome. A relative told them about Hospital Guide Foundation (HGF) which provides free guidance when patients are confused and don't know where to go for specific kinds of medical assistance. "We were more concerned about the Down Syndrome than the heart defect. Almost every doctor had told us that not much could be done for a child with Down Syndrome. This is when HGF came in and introduced us to two doctors in Delhi, whose guidance changed everything. Thanks to the right quality of advice, our son Darsh's quality of life has improved by as much as 80 percent" says Jyoti.

There are many examples like these that underline the need of matching the right doctors to patients in this complex scenario of super specialization in healthcare. In India, the doctor-patient ratio currently stands at 1:1700 as compared to the minimum recommendation by World Health Organization of 1:1000. And this number is even lower in rural areas. The genesis of Hospital Guide Foundation (HGF) came from the need to address this gap by using basic technology (internet & telephone) effectively and in a competent fashion so that access to the right doctor is no longer an impossible task for a patient.

Hospital Guide Foundation (HGF) is a Non-Governmental, Not-for-Profit Organization which works towards revolutionizing healthcare in India. It is the most stringent form of a Non Governmental Organization, a company under Section 8 for Charitable Purposes licensed by the Government of India. "With the concept of the family physician dwindling in India, and the proliferation of multi-specialties and multi-specialty hospitals, it is very difficult for a lay man to find the right doctor for their specific problem. And even if they know the right specialty, how do they identify an ethical/competent doctor? This may result in loss of time, energy, money and possibly life," explains Indiritta Singh D'mello, Co-Founder of HGF, who hails from a Royal Family in India and is an Oxford graduate with a Post Graduate Diploma in Medical Law & Ethics from a premier law school in India.

HGF bridges the gap in healthcare between healthcare providers and seekers by finding the right match for patients. This is done by evaluating a patient's request, validating it with an esteemed set of doctors and identifying the right specialty and right doctor. HGF's endeavor is not only to find the right specialty but a doctor who is ethical, competent and meets the patient's requirements. To ensure neutrality of services, HGF has no commercial transaction with the enlisted doctors/healthcare providers & patients. This is a service differentiator, as there are several commercial organizations in India which earn a commission from healthcare providers for bringing in patients.

Once HGF receives the query through their website www.hospitalguide.in, it follows up by a phone call to the person sending the query. People can also call HGF directly. "It is very important to have a conversation with the patient or attendant since health is a very sensitive topic and the family needs to know that we care. In these conversations we get a lot more relevant information, sometimes even discovering that the patient's need is something quite different from what they had initially thought," says Indiritta. The last step of the patient handling query is following up with feedback which is integral to the whole cycle.

Today, 5 years from its inception, HGF has over 700 Doctors on their database, services available in Delhi and Bangalore, over 50,000 members on its Facebook forum and a website that sees regular queries which the organization is able to handle with the help of the foremost doctors of the country.