

Original Research Article

Organising free health camp: insight into the approach of public and private sectors hospitals

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ABSTRACT

Background: World Health Organization in the year 2019, World Health Day has focused on Universal Health Coverage, with the theme Health for all - everyone, everywhere. It is essential to provide basic primary care to every stratum of society. This article discussed organizing a mega health camp by an institute of national importance in eastern India and the insight into the approaches.

Methods: Community-based mega health camp organized at the satellite center to address the medical and surgical problems and their effective management. The organizers are interviewed based on structured questionnaires. A few Marketing personnel were interviewed, and a focused group discussion was made for the beneficiaries to understand their feedback.

Results: Total number of patients who availed of the consultation is 2485. The maximum number of patients reported to the specialties like Dermatology (487), Neurology (332), General Medicine (273), Orthopaedics (270), Eye (266), Endocrinology (191), Gastroenterology (188), ENT (153).

Conclusions: Meticulous planning within a brief span of time, statutory compliance, event awareness, support of opinion leaders, collaborative efforts, and community involvement are some of the crucial factors contributing to the massive success of a camp. A divergent approach towards health camps by public and private sector hospitals is essential.

Keywords: Health camp, Primary care, Universal health coverage, Public sector, Health for all

INTRODUCTION

According to the WHO theme 2019, "Universal Health Coverage: Everyone, Everywhere," providing basic primary care to every stratum of society is essential.¹ Access to primary health care is a requirement for every individual. Still, a lack of quality infrastructure, a shortage of qualified medical functionaries, and the unavailability of essential medicines and medical facilities thwart its reach to Indian citizens.² The camp approach has been preferred for a long time to increase access to healthcare near people's doorsteps. Also, as per

the National Health Mission, this is the typical approach commonly used.^{3,4} Private sector hospitals organize numerous free health check-up camps, and it has been a standard method used by public hospitals to reach far-flung rural areas. However, the concept of health camps is sometimes a success, and the proper utilization of camp services depends on the organizers' motive and the target population's attitude.⁵ This article discussed organizing a mega health camp by an institute of national importance in eastern India and the opinion of the people who attended this camp. It also probes into the premise of organizing free health camps by prominent private sector hospitals in the city.

METHODS

This is a descriptive study of single day multi-specialty mega health camp conducted by All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar in collaboration with DRDO, Ministry of Defence at the temporary location of AIIMS Bhubaneswar Satellite Centre, in Defence Colony, Balasore. (Figure 1) during the year 2019 on 4th of July.

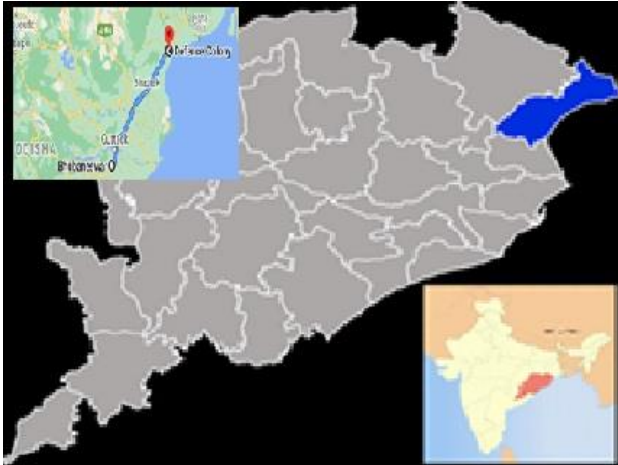


Figure 1: Site of the camp location.

We interviewed the institute faculty and staff responsible for managing this camp using a structured questionnaire.

A focused group discussion conducts with a few of the beneficiaries who attended the camp to understand their perceptions. We interviewed Five senior marketing executives of selected private hospitals in the area to appreciate their approach and expectations toward free health camps. Samples are used using judgmental sampling.

Statistical analysis

The quantitative data regarding the center was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The focused group discussions and interviews were transcript and were studied to extract emerging themes and discuss the qualitative data obtained. Ethical approval: The study did not have any intervention and the study was done following the declaration of Helsinki, so ethical approval not required.

RESULTS

The health camp was held in Balasore in the northeastern part of Odisha, about 200 km from Bhubaneswar. A team of 36 doctors from various specialties participated in the center. The total number of patients who availed of the consultation is 2485. The maximum number of patients reported to the specialties like Dermatology (487), Neurology (332), General Medicine (273), Orthopaedics (270), Eye (266), Endocrinology (191), Gastroenterology (188), ENT (153) (Figure 2).

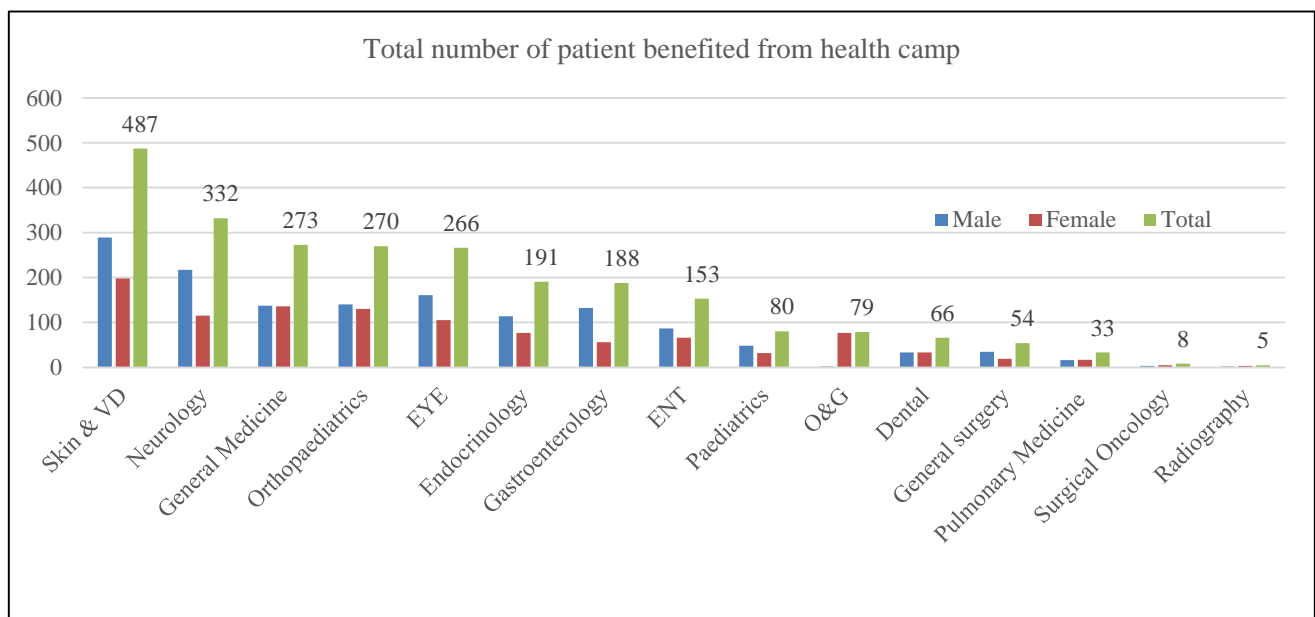


Figure 2: Distribution of the patients in specialties.

To organize the camp, the organizers shared the following important points

Planning considerations

Meticulous planning is vital to make any camp successful. When selecting the health camp's location, it

is essential to determine the demographics and disease prevalence in that area. This phase includes mapping out the overall aspect of the health camp, including venue, workforce planning, financial planning, resource allocation, logistics and transportation planning, with proper planning monitoring and supervision in between the camp.⁶

Statutory compliance

It is essential to obtain permission from the local health authorities before conducting a health camp per the new guidelines in India. Additional approval from the police, fire department, and municipal authorities depends on the venue and the expected crowd.

Popularizing the camp

This is the most critical factor that predicts the success of any health event. Various modalities, such as mobile announcement vehicles, pamphlets in newspapers, banners in popular public places, healthcare centers/medicine shops, etc., can be adopted. Social media is a potent tool nowadays; leveraging it to target the local population can be extremely helpful.

Roping in opinion leaders

Public perception easily influences by opinion leaders in our country. When requested to participate or inaugurate the health camp, local leaders, public personalities, high government officials, and doctors positively influence the local target population and draw in more crowds to the camp.

Community participation

Involving local Government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), schools, colleges, or community members in preparations is often a method adopted to gain acceptance of the event in the community as well as spread word of mouth for quick publicity.

From the focused group discussion with a few of the beneficiaries at the camp, the following points emerged as essential influencers on the camp's success.

The popularity of the attending physicians

If the doctors coming to the camp are popular in that region, then patients will come without hesitation. Often doctors have good practice in a particular geographical area and are very popular. Having such doctors will attract many patients easily. These doctors are usually more approachable and have good communication skills.

The credibility of the organizing hospital

People often judge the quality and the motive of health camps from the hospital that is organizing the camp. The participants mentioned that they were often apprehensive about the reasons for selecting private hospitals.

Availability of Healthcare services locally

When a particular specialty was available locally or in a nearby area, patients seemed less enthusiastic to face the inconvenience of a crowded health camp. However, the financial capacity of the beneficiaries influenced this

opinion. People who wanted free consultations were more open to attending a health camp.

Availability of free medicines and checks

This emerged as a primary criterion for which many patients came to health camps. Invariably every respondent expressed eagerness to receive some free medicines after the consultations. The facility for free Blood Pressure monitoring, Blood Sugar checks, Eye checkup, and provision for free spectacles were equally essential influencers.

To understand the approach of private sector hospitals toward free health camps few of the senior marketing executives of select private hospitals were interviewed. From the analysis of the interview transcripts, a common theme emerged. These private sector hospitals took the standard approach to the long-term marketing plan of the hospitals. The hospitals usually followed a detailed plan when deciding on conducting any health camp:

Marketing territory

The entire catchment area of the hospital divides into territories, and a marketing executive allows a particular geographical part. This executive is responsible for generating revenue for the hospital from his region.

Consumer survey

The marketing team in a particular territory conducts detailed surveys of the available healthcare services. They collect data on hospitals available, doctors present, laboratory services available, emergency and trauma services, common diseases prevalent in the area, and an entire gamut of information.

Patient database

The hospital collects demographic data and other relevant information about every patient visiting the hospital. These hospitals usually have a robust Hospital Information System. This information is analyzed to know the areas from where the majority of the patients are availing of the hospital services and other potential sites they need to catch up on.

Practice development plan

A detailed plan to popularize each consultant doctor in the hospital prepares based on the specialty, catchment area, patient segment, and the number of patients the doctor is attending. A growth plan prepares to increase the patient footfall and subsequent surgeries/inpatient admissions that will finally have an appositive impact on the revenue generation of the hospital.

Business development plan

A comprehensive business development plan is made for the hospital to incorporate data from all the above

aspects. Free Health Camps are just one of the methods used to penetrate the market. It is a belief among the private sector that the consumer segment that these hospitals target will only come to a free health camp if under extreme circumstances. So, it is not considered a viable marketing tool and uses only when approaching new territories for the first time.

DISCUSSION

Bhondve et al, in their study, mentioned that the scope of medical services offered, expert doctors, and the provision of expensive medicines or free diagnostic tests were among the principal factors for beneficiary satisfaction in a health camp. The authors also mention that the use of print and electronic media and social media platforms was extremely helpful in popularising the health camp.¹ Similar themes have also emerged in our study. Selvaraj et al, in their study entitled "Health camp satisfaction survey," mention that more than half of the camp attendees (54.3%) felt that doctors should be friendlier in the camp.⁷ This compliments the article's findings, stating that famous doctors are usually approachable and have good communication skills. It is apparent from the observations of this article that private-sector hospitals organize free health camps as part of a well-calculated marketing plan with business development as the primary objective, which is a reasonably justified approach considering the environment in which they operate. However, Ruban R et al, mention that for a medical college hospital, the purpose is to orient medical students toward the health needs of the people at the primary care level and to bring health awareness to communities with less access to direct health care services.⁸ Similarly, Selvaraj et al, states that these camps act as an opportunity to orient medical graduates toward ordinary people's health needs and identify the potential role of various non-health personnel in implementing health measures.⁷ Liu et al, state that from the public health point of view, more participation-friendly strategies, such as organizing multiple small-scale health camps in the subdistrict areas. It helps in more exceptional attention to individual beneficiaries, enlistment of the disease trend of a particular area, and categorizing the patients requiring super specialty care for further organization of specific super-specialty camps. Prioritizing the specific healthcare requirement of a particular area can be accelerated by community participation, which will further help in gaining universal health coverage.⁹ Our study reveals that public and private sector hospitals have divergent approaches towards free health camps, which may need to be in unity with the overall public health goal.

This study has the limitation of a low sample size and is from one single event only. Further study may bring more insight into the subject.

CONCLUSION

This article explains the process of organizing a mega health camp concerning one organized at Balasore, Odisha, by one of the institutes of national importance in Bhubaneswar. It explains that meticulous planning within a brief span of time, statutory compliance, event awareness, support of opinion leaders, collaborative efforts, and community involvement are some of the crucial factors contributing to the massive success of a camp. The article further highlighted that beneficiaries perceive infrequent responsive doctors, the credibility of the organizer, the scope of local healthcare services, provision of free medicines and expensive tests are some critical factors to the patient footfall in a health camp. Finally, the article discussed public and private sector hospitals' divergent approaches toward health camps.

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