Contemporary Issue

REINVESTING HOSPITAL WASTE - A MASTER PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PATIENTS

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ABSTRACT

It is a general observation that hospital stay is dull and boring. It is mainly because the patients remain unoccupied. Their time is wasted. It is more so in service hospitals where apparently trivial cases are admitted for prolonged periods. A development programme for the patients by reinvesting their own wasted seconds may generate revolutionary progress in patient care.

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Introduction

The most precious thing that is wasted in the service hospitals is patients' time.

Rambir felt pain on his right leg just before completing a five kilometer run. He reported to the Regimental Medical Officer who eventually sent him to hospital for an X-Ray examination. He was diagnosed as a case of stress fracture and admitted to the hospital. He wouldn't like to recollect his six weeks' stay in the hospital with a plaster cast on his right leg. It did not immobilise him, but all the same he felt that he got decayed in forced in-activity. Never, time would be so slow and unproductive and never, life would be so boring and isolated!

Gopalan was found to have hypertension during a routine medical check up. It did upset him, but what upset him more was when he had to stay in the hospital for four weeks without receiving any active treatment for a dose regularisation. For the first time in life, he watched the magic of sunrise and sunset from a hospital corridor. But on subsequent days, he gazed at the impassioned horizon and lamented the death of time.

A survey shows that 80% of the in-patients in service hospitals do not require very active treatment. Majority of them are mobile and capable of looking after themselves. Yet they are kept in the hospitals for longer periods due to peculiar service requirements. The periods are much more in chronic care hospitals. They surrender their precious time to dull hospital routines. It is time to think about reinvesting the patients time for their own development.

Patients' Development Programme

There are many ways by which the patients can be developed while undergoing treatment. They can be assisted in skill development, physical development, academic development, personality development, health education and entertainment. Then the hospital will become a true centre of excellence of socio-cultural, educational and personal advancement, besides health care.

Skill Development

The patients can be given hands-on training in first aid and basic medication by the hospital staff. A training programme for six days may be designed with one period of 40 minutes per day. The timing can be adjusted according to convenience of staff and space. Each class can have one first aid manoeuvre and lesson on medication. The objective should be that each participant would be able to perform the manoeuvre with confidence. The curriculum can be repeated in the next week for benefit of both the fresh patients and old patients. Chronic patients may be even used as instructors after attending a few training cycles. The help of other Arms and Services can also be taken in training them in other skills like computer operations, radio repair, electric jobs etc. Motivated patients after discharge from the hospital can function as valuable nuclei to impart training to their buddies and relatives. A real investment.

Physical Development

The sense of physical development is an integral part of military life. It can be continued in the hospital. The patients can be selected by the treating physician

and encouraged to undertake graded physical exercise under supervision. It can be an extension of morning out door activity as being practised in all military units or an indoor activity. The physiotherapy wing at each hospital may be suitably modified and equipped to meet the needs of more patients. The patients with disability of the lower limbs may not have any restriction to exercise the upper limbs. It is also desirable to issue separate physical training dress to the patients so that the patients uniform is not unduly soiled.

Academic Development

It is well-known that the service personnel have to pass different grading exams during their career. A part of hospitalised time of the patient can be utilised for their academic update. The personnel of Army Education Corps or qualified members of voluntary organisations can do great service in this direction. They can take classes on various subjects like Hindi, English, Arithmetics, terms and conditions in service, current affairs etc. A well stocked library may enhance the learning process and may be a source of entertainment too.

Health Education

A curious observation is that many patients are unaware of their disease even after discharge from the hospitals. It is essential that the patients should be informed of the causes, nature, course, prognosis, duration of treatment or hospitalisation, preventive measures, restrictions etc of their diseases. The patients and visitors too may be given general information on common diseases and importance of healthy living. The attitude of the patients can be changed by giving them information, by creating a healthy environment and by feeding them with prescribed diets. Piped music systems and VCDs/VCRs if available may be interestingly and intelligently utilised for health education.

Entertainment

A natural way to make the patients accept the hospital regimen and utilise their time is through entertainment. Televisions and radios provide both entertainment and information. Availability of indoor and outdoor games may be a great source of physical and mental relaxation. Some patients would find gardening as an absorbing hobby.

Personality Development

Just as it takes time for change in attitude, it takes time for personality development. It takes rather more time. But hospital can help the patients to shape their

personality and future by providing an environment of disciplined growth. When the patients are guided to undergo skill development and physical development, when they are assisted for academic growth and health education and persuaded to take part in organised games and other entertaining activities, personality transformation becomes a reality.

Resources

The first step in this programme is identifying the hidden resources and expanding them to meet the new needs. The most valuable resource is the staff and their willingness. They may be motivated to shoulder additional responsibilities.

Space may be a problem. The dining hall of the patients may be converted into a multipurpose room. The classes could be taken duly avoiding the meal times. It can also be converted into a library and a place for indoor games. At bigger places, patients' recreation room, day room, technical training school or any other such space could be shared for the purpose. The size of the batch for skill development should not be more than 15-20. If patients are more, multiple batches can be made and trained in rotation; alternatively more instructors and class rooms may be created. The ultimate success of the programme depends upon the dedication of the entire staff and commitment from the top.

Change in Heart

The programme was tried in two hospitals with excellent results. There was admirable participation among the staff, the patients and the units of the station, pre and post programme surveys revealed spectacular attitudinal change and enthusiastic yearning for continuation. Many patients would recollect the hospital stay as memorable. Others would call it fruitful. At one place, the discharged patients started training their buddies in First Aid and Basic Medication. "It was exciting!" an ex-patient wrote; "on 30th September, I was swimming at Majorda beach. There were a few others too. I saw a child being swayed away by a retreating tide. I ventured to salvage the child before his disappearance in the deep sea. When I brought the child to the bank, he was not breathing. People wanted him to be rushed to the nearest doctor who would be about one kilometer away. Then I remembered the first aid class of your hospital and recollected the teaching that the first aider is the first doctor in drowning. I went step by step. I removed the water, I pumped air into his lungs and thumped his heart. He breathed! I couldn't believe it. This letter, if it is wet, it is with my tears".