

Social Media and Medical Tourism, Medical Treatment Beyond Borders

Eye Surgeons of SuVi Eye Institute, Kota share Story About Medical Tourism in Kota City



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Out-reach activities have always had an important role for any hospital. They are a great way to make your name known in the wider community and are also an elegant and subtle way to market your good work. The out-reach activities in the government set-up and Medical Colleges are a way to get the residents involved in Community work, thereby helping them to learn new skills and a wider spectrum of diseases. At the same time, outreach activities by Healthcare establishments in the Private Sector help to generate goodwill, help to spread a good work about your work and give a lot of job satisfaction to the professionals involved.

Outreach activities in India have traditionally meant organizing camps in villages and other far-flung areas, thus helping to provide healthcare facilities in these areas. These could be screening camps, or in the case of Ophthalmology, eye camps performing



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cataract surgery have provided really helped to remove the cataract backlog from these underserved areas. However, most camps, especially in the urban areas are just a way to inform the wider public about the facilities

provided in your healthcare set-up, or are screening camps for widespread diseases like Diabetes and Hypertension. With the changing demographics and the easy availability of Internet and Social Media, this provides another great method for organizing different kind of outreach activities.

We all know that technology has undergone a huge revolution in recent times and has also impacted the field of medical education and treatment. The place of big, unwieldy books has been taken over in many instances by slim computers and sleek smart-phones. With communication becoming so fast, social media has caught on and has attracted hordes of users all over the world. These sites as well as others help us remain in touch with professional colleagues and stay abreast of the latest developments. With the availability of sophisticated and inexpensive recording and editing devices and software, surgical videos can now be easily made and shared with colleagues through various websites and social media.



TRANSCENDING BORDERS:

While connecting with doctors (eye surgeons) from far away is a great experience, the real adventure of social media is in being able to connect with patients and the general public.

The medical profession has always moved beyond borders, an example being Doctors Sans Borders and ORBIS aircraft being another glorious example of teaching and medical services beyond borders.

MEDICAL TOURISM: A JOURNEY FROM KARACHI, PAKISTAN TO KOTA, INDIA: India and Pakistan share a troubled border, despite many efforts for peace, and recent incidents have made it impossible to have good citizen interaction. However, in better times, many patients, especially children, have come over to India from Pakistan to receive medical treatment as well as surgical procedures at some big institutions. Ours is a unique story of trust developed over social media to the extent that a software engineer from Karachi came over to Kota to get his cataract surgery done. Mr Fahim Uddin, a software engineer (working at Orthopedic and Medical Institute) from Karachi, Pakistan, was a myope and developed cataracts at about 40 years

of age. His own Internet search led him through IOL websites, and he decided he wanted a particular multifocal IOL (Tecnis Multifocal IOL, Johnson & Johnson, USA) that was not available in Pakistan. He then searched for the IOL in India and found many videos we had posted on the implantation of this IOL. He communicated with us through social media, and, after a few interactions, developed so much trust that he decided to come to India for the surgery. He came over on a medical VISA that was issued by Indian embassy in Karachi, Pakistan after thorough scrutiny. He underwent cataract surgery on both eyes with the multifocal IOL of his choice at SuVi Eye Institute, Kota and was extremely happy with the results (6/6 and N6 in both eyes unaided). His visit to India was a unique case of human trust and empathy that knows no boundaries, neither political, nor religious.

A word of caution here, after the case of the Egyptian Eman Ahmed. While it is natural human tendency to undertake difficult, challenging and new tasks and then inform the world about our successes, we must be extremely careful to weigh the patient expectations before undertaking any such activity. The patients who are willing to travel much farther than usual, could either have unreasonable expectations, or could be having really difficult underlying health conditions,

due to which the treatment at their place seems unsatisfactory. Even when their reasons for travel are reasonable and justified, (like the lack of availability of a particular IOL), we must ensure that we spend a good amount of chair time to explain the prognosis. If we go overboard, this kind of outreach activity can sometimes come back to haunt us because of mismatch in expectations and surgical possibilities.

**CONCLUSION:**

Social media has taken over our lives and has tremendous potential to be used as a networking tool to promote New Age outreach activities in the health sector like reaching across to patients far and wide and having greater interaction among doctors all over the world. Our experience at SuVi Eye Institute Kota, Rajasthan suggest that social media provides us all a great opportunity to reach a wider audience, and eye surgery is especially suited for the sharing of surgical techniques and tips. These sites may prove to be just what the doctor ordered to bring about greater interaction and trust among people otherwise separated by manmade borders.

Our Experience at SuVi Eye Institute, KOTA, Rajasthan

Our interest in documentation and sharing eye surgery prompted us to make a YouTube channel dedicated to ophthalmic surgical videos (<http://www.youtube.com/user/Drsureshkpandey>) which attracted many views (930,203) and subscribers (1694). This helped us to make new connections with ophthalmic colleagues, and it was our privilege to have more than 30 ophthalmologists come over to SuVi Eye Institute, Kota, India (www.suviyehospital.com) for observer-ship/surgical training from USA, Europe, Middle East, and Africa. Their journey from a distant country to a small Indian city (Kota, Rajasthan) is a testament to the rising influence of social media interactions (Figure 1). We also have opportunity to perform eye surgery at SuVi Eye Institute Kota on more than 100 cases from various countries. For a video on our experience using medical tourism and social media to transcend borders, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=SO233GCcLZk&list=UU12vTF4P0xWnhvjGbG2h94w&index=1.