Preface

In our country, the development of corporate hospitals is the most important development in private health sector. But today the health care market has become consumer centered. To day the Patients are better informed and know more about health and medical services. They ask for high care and, having become cost conscious, demand quality care at a reasonable price. They personally shop for and choose their hospitals and take responsibility for their judgment and decisions.

The health care today, competition and industry structure is also undergoing a massive change. Few years back, the competitor was viewed as the other hospital in town, but today’s competitor is large national or a multinational organization with vast economic resources at its disposal. On the other hand, corporate hospitals are characterized by massive consolidation among hospitals, physician groups, insurance entities etc.

In this context, hospital services marketing is slowly and surely coming of age even in our country and is being woven into the fabric of hospital’s planning and public relation programmes. But much of the negative attitude towards hospital marketing stems from the salesman’s image. It conjures in the minds of people, particularly among the physicians. At the same time, the concept of marketing in the hospital set-up is a grossly misunderstood idea. Marketing is not selling as most people are inclined to believe, and certainly it does not involve creating a demand that is not needed. It is seeing what the public perceives as its needs, having the hospital identify the services it is capable of delivering and then developing those services.

In other words, when a hospital embarks on a marketing programme, it seeks to identify the needs of present and prospective patients, and tries to meet those needs effectively. It then needs to provide information about the special services it has to offer and promote them to attract people. Knowledge of the customer is the key to developing effective marketing strategies. Understanding product strategies along with the concern pricing and distribution are now relevant in a marketplace where hospitals have realized to capture a large number of patients into a health plane that covers all of their medical needs. Promotion, which was the primary focus of marketing in the past, is still of importance, but has grown increasingly complex. Now, a full range of promotional tools are necessary to competitively market a service.
The product element of the hospital includes diagnosis, treatment provided, the education and training provided to nursing students and the research. Services like facilities for attendants, ambulance and pharmacy services etc. augment the core service. The pricing of services should take into consideration the operational costs and the paying ability of the patients, apart from the value provided to the customers. Placement of hospital and its proximity play a key role in marketing of hospital services. Promotion of the services of corporate hospitals using advertisements, banners, hoardings and promotion campaigns also important for gaining the attention of the needy. When services are provided at concessional cost, has become imperative to survive in the competitive market. Being knowledge based industry, people play a very important role in marketing hospital services. Process and value to customers also improve the efficiency of operations of the hospital. Physical evidence can be provided using a good layout and maintaining hygiene. So marketing may have many virtues. It can be used by hospitals as a formidable weapon to forge a competitive edge over their rivals or to ensure quality and attract a great number of patients. Laudable as these efforts and qualities are, they will not by themselves guarantee patient satisfaction.

This research work is a humble attempt to analyze the marketing mix in the hospital, and to suggest the ways for better marketing the hospital services. In this process, this work tries to study the genesis and growth of the existing hospitals, studying the marketing mix in the selected corporate hospitals, and to conduct patient satisfaction survey about the performance of the hospitals with the objective of suggesting suitable measures to strengthen the present prevailing system.