



Daljit Singh

EDITORS' NOTE *Daljit Singh is the President of Fortis Healthcare. He has also held the office of CEO. Prior to joining Fortis, Singh was on the Board of Directors of ICI India, which was a subsidiary of the British multinational, and served as the Executive Director in charge of Human Resources, Manufacturing, External Relations, and*

Communications. Among key responsibilities held, he was the Chief Executive for Pharmaceuticals, Specialties, and Catalyst businesses. Singh is on the Steering Boards constituted by the World Economic Forum to guide two major global projects: "Scenarios for Sustainable Health Systems" and "The Healthy Living Charter." He is also on the Forum's Advisory Board on "The Economic Burden of Non-communicable Diseases in India." A graduate from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, Singh was a Commonwealth Scholar to the Senior Management Programme at the Manchester Business School in 1995.

INSTITUTION BRIEF *Fortis Healthcare Limited (www.fortishealthcare.com) is an integrated health care delivery service provider in Asia. The health care verticals of the company span primary care, diagnostics, day care specialty, and hospitals, with a health care network reaching 12 countries. Currently, the company operates its health care delivery network in India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam, Dubai, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Nepal with 76 hospitals (including projects under development), 11,000 potential beds, 600 primary care centers, 190 day care specialty centers, 240 diagnostic centers, and with over 22,500 employees.*

Would you provide a history of Fortis Healthcare and an overview of your leadership in the markets served?

Fortis has been operational for just under 12 years now. It's an organization promoted by the Singh family – promoters of India's leading pharmaceuticals organization, developed over three generations. It was in the mid-90s that the Chairman took a call to deepen the family's presence in the field of health care by committing to invest in the domains of health care delivery, diagnostics, pharmacies, health care IT, health insurance, and financial services. The Chairman passed away in 1999, soon after the commencement of construction of our first hospital in Mohali, and the responsibility for the business was passed on to his two sons, both in their 20s.

Fortis Healthcare kicked off operations with the commissioning of the "Fortis Heart Institute" in 2001; by 2002, its scope was enhanced to include the compendium of most multi-specialties. From then on, the organization embarked on an aggressive expansion spree, led by a combination of M&A and Green-Field forays. By 2010, with a series of acquisitions including the prestigious Escorts group of hospitals and Wockhardt hospitals, Fortis assumed leadership in the health care delivery space

of the country. During this period, the organization built up a strong reputation for quality and operational excellence, was listed on the Indian stock exchange, and expanded its footprint across various countries of Asia-Pacific.

Today, we have a significant network of facilities with a presence in 12 countries and we are amongst the largest health care providers in Asia, with a strong focus on developing and growing the health care delivery market in India.

Will your 12 markets remain the focus or will you expand into additional markets?

We ventured into international markets about four years ago with the intent to be a Pan-Asian organization. Health care delivery is local in nature and so it is essential to identify countries that have cultural affinity, similar health care delivery challenges and systems, and price points that are not wildly different and offer an ability to cross leverage good practices and learning.

Our strategy is to develop our current businesses and our priority will be to deepen our presence in India.

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How does Fortis operate with excellence to achieve quality with low cost? What are you focusing on to drive the next stage of innovation?

It is important for us to standardize our processes and systems, so as to deliver services in a predictable manner that are consistently of good quality. Our aspiration, to set up a large network of hospitals, must be accompanied by a strong focus on developing and running processes that are replicable and scalable. In a sector that is not well-organized in our country, this approach would not only generate patient loyalty but also be a significant differentiator.

Consequently, there has been a lot of management focus on standardization and effecting improvements. All hospital processes have been studied by relevant internal experts and reengineered to become efficient and repeatable, and supported by a rigorous measuring and monitoring system. The scorecard is shared widely and the bar continues to be raised through a process of continuous improvement. We are able to manage efficient turnaround of our assets and deliver with respect to our promises regarding consistently low discharge time, fast emergency response time, issuing of radiology and pathology results

within promised time periods, etc. This efficiency orientation has led to a remarkable reduction in the average length of stay of patients across our hospitals, often as high as 25 percent.

How have you successfully engaged your physicians in giving the best quality care at the lowest cost?

For too long, clinicians have been confined only to clinical work; their deep knowledge of hospital operations, including patient care and safety, must be leveraged. Hence, it is critical that all efforts are made to integrate them into most aspects of hospital operations.

There was considerable skepticism when we embarked upon "standardization." However, when it was explained that this would lead to better quality and patient satisfaction, we were able to secure the support of our senior clinicians.

When we embarked on our "Quality Accreditation" initiative, we sponsored a team comprised of doctors and administrators to attend the JCI Chicago Practicum in 2005. This heightened the team's awareness regarding the benefits of implementing quality systems. The Fortis group now has the largest number of accredited hospitals in the country.

We have since introduced the concept of clinical governance across our hospitals with the active participation and support of our clinicians. This will see us moving onto the next platform of clinical excellence.

You have improved patient satisfaction without incurring great cost. How have you accomplished this?

We came to understand that a lot of patient satisfaction was linked to aspects of service outside of the "clinical" domain. So we inducted into our teams people from the hospitality sector. Their orientation towards all aspects related to patient and attendant comfort has contributed significantly to the enhancement of satisfaction among patients.

We also continue to make our hospital systems more transparent and interactive for patients through improved communication, counseling, and expectation setting.

We recently opened our flagship hospital, the Fortis Memorial Research Institute (FMRI) in Gurgaon. The concept was powered by the vision to create a destination for healing – one that amalgamates within itself the highest aspirations to provide the best that medical science has to offer, supported actively by human values of empathy, care, and service at its core.

Recognizing the process of health care delivery as one that is participatory, we have sought to create an environment that promotes the invaluable contribution of the patient's "body, mind, and soul" in the transformation of illness into wellness.

Incorporating the ancient medical traditions of our country, including holistic healing therapies, the medical programs at FMRI encompass all super- and multi-specialties. To provide comfort to the patient and accelerate the healing process, we offer unique features like a wellness spa, swimming pool, gym, a cinema theater, food courts, a rest and recreation area, and art therapy programs, among other facilities. This hospital will set new standards in the way patient care will be delivered throughout leading institutions across the world. ●