

'India ideal for med studies'

By Malathy Iyer/TNN

Mumbai: With medical tourism helping doctors and students upgrade their skills, private hospitals too are getting foreign students who prefer to do their "elective course" in India.

Doctors from Vietnam have dropped by to pick up the latest in knee replacement from Dr M Agarwala of Hinduja Hospital. Dr Nandu Laud, who was part of the team that operated on former Prime Minister A B Vajpayee's knees, holds an annual course along with Dr Harish Bhende on orthopaedic surgery. Two doctors from Uzbekistan have got clearances from the foreign ministry and the Medical Council of India to study endoscopic ultrasound in Wockhardt, Bangalore.

"Apollo, Chennai, gets students from the Seychelles and Maldives as well as from Western countries to study general surgery and intensive care medicine," says CEO George Eapen. Wockhardt Hospital CEO Vishal Bali adds, "India is now emerging as a teaching hub as well."

For medical students and doctors from neighbouring countries

such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Maldives, India's comparatively better and more vast medical facilities offer them many opportunities for learning. A few months ago, a group of Pakistani doctors specialising in community medicine spent a few months in Mumbai.

But for students from the developed world, India's huge 'misery' load offers opportunity of a different kind. As Dr Atul Goel, who heads neurosurgery in KEM Hospital, puts it, "Unlike in the West, our people don't seek immediate medical treatment, they let tumours and tuberculosis fester and get worse before rushing to the doctors. So, we get the most complex cases in the world." Ob-serving treatment of such cases is the best education these students can get, he adds.

Indeed, as renowned Chicago-based infectious diseases expert Dr John Paul Quinn mentioned during his recent visit to India, "India is a paradise of diseases." While the American expert had seen only one typhoid case in his career spanning more than three decades, Indian doctors see thousands of such cases every year.

For young intensivist Dr Tiliak Shah, the decision to come to India for training was pivotal to his future plans. "I hope to help raise funds and direct clinical programmes for the under-served, so I had to have firsthand experience of the system," says the American doctor of Indian origin.

For Dr Li, the similarity between disease patterns in India and China was a deciding factor in choosing his Asian neighbour against an Australian hospital. "China has a huge backlog for cardiac surgery and we have been slow in catching up with the latest in this specialty, especially off-pump and awake heart surgeries" he says, with the help of his 'Indian teacher' Dr V Jawali of Wockhardt Hospital. It also helped that two groups of Chinese surgeons had trained under Dr Jawali in the last one year.

According to Yale student Pavithra, a stint in India helps one become a global physician. "One can truly get the ability to diagnose more than just illnesses of the developed world—it allows one also to learn to treat afflictions that face the majority of the world's population," she said.