



Food safety in hospital

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There is a shift from bland, tasteless food to delicious gourmet food in hospitals

BY ASHWIN BHADRI

It is ironic to compare food in hospitals with that of hotels. Both form a colossal part of hospitality sector, yet are poles apart. The food industry stands at the precipice, watching the market crumble while generating revenue itself. It is only natural that the retail sector, as monumental as this, should be associated with several adjuvant industries - from various scientific research organisations and pharmaceuticals to hospitals, municipalities and insurance companies. Having said this, what comes next in mind is food safety - plans, protocols, blueprints and projects, all conceptualised and made into reality or few, which are in the pipeline, to ensure hygienic food for people.

Around 3,51,000 people die of food poisoning globally every year, according to the WHO.

Hotel Customers to Hospital Patients

It would only be correct to say that hotels and hospitals remain a prime focus for the food market. Both sectors communicate directly with major chunk of the 1.25 billion population of India; 7 billion

plus populated world likewise. These are the two domains wherein the consumers stand at the crossroad of exquisite, delicious food and hygienic, safe edible products. Increasing demands of customers and patients, in terms of palate, comfort, cuisines, take-out orders, and availability of wholesome food have put tremendous pressure on the food businesses.

The quintessential facilities have now steered itself towards more contemporary trends like changing the bland, tasteless food of hospital to delicious gourmet food. Food safety is a prime concern in hospitals. Many food-borne diseases and nosocomial diseases have their origin in these areas. In the case of hospitals, people with weak immunity are found in large numbers.

Platter and Patients

Hospitals have become the hub of many nosocomial diseases, growing as a centre for plausible epidemic. Bewildering statistics from the NHS have revealed that 15.5 million people were admitted in hospital, in 2013-14 alone. This means that 42,400 people were admitted per day, 870 more

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than previous year. This gives us a small gist of the enormous healthcare business, which seconds the development of efficient food safety programme in the medical sector.

As per Ministry of Statistics and Programme of India, the government has focused on 'Health for All' since its inception. However, food safety in hospitals has its nemesis circling around like a hawk. These contaminants can be of Biological (micro-organisms), Chemical (addition of disinfectants), Physical (dust, nails, and hair) and Allergenic nature (dairy products, nuts). The WHO, in a survey conducted in 2010, revealed some upsetting numbers - African and South Asian countries have the highest number of food-borne diseases.

To top this, one out of every eight people admitted in Indian hospitals succumb to nosocomial or hospital acquired Infection (HAI). This was an independent survey taken up by two organisations, namely Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCR) and International Nosocomial Infection Control Consortium (INICC). Such HAIs are undermined in terms of its complexity and are generally neglected by the hospital authorities, cafeterias and canteens. Affecting mostly children and the senior citizens, the intensity of the disease usually varies from extended stay in the hospital to deterioration of the patient's condition and or fatality.

2. Importance should be paid to infrastructure, storage, ventilation and head gears.

Leading hospitals generally have their separate food managers, staff and caterers. The facility management of these healthcare institutes should take the necessary precautions to ensure safe food. While much food is prepared in-house, infrastructure, storage, ventilation, use of gloves, head gears, etc should be a primary concern. Major spread of infections can be prevented in the hospital premises, bringing down the mortality rate.

Breach Candy, the prestigious hospital in Mumbai, has a list of eminent personalities who have benefitted from the immaculate facilities of the infirmary. The kitchen of this hospital is particularly famous for serving both veg and non-veg cuisines, including lite diet, customised diet and a provision to change any component in the serving after consulting the dietician.

The chief manager of food services of Breach Candy does not deny that managing the safety and hygiene of the food, keeping in mind the demands of patients, is tough. "With rising demands and expectations from a hospital that has been here for more than six decades, serving quality and one-on-one services to its patients is a challenge," asserts the Chief.

Roadmap to the Future

Several government initiatives and FSSAI (India's Food Safety and monitoring Authority) strategies make way for a promising safe food business. Hospitals are also looking forward to a complete makeover in terms of cuisines and food serving methods. Hotel segments, on the other hand, are clinching several food safety programmes with leading government and private testing companies, for delivery of safe edible products to its end users. [HR](#)



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