



## Interview

with

### Mohammad Faizur Rahman

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#### Since its inception in 2006, what has been United Hospital's driving force in the ever-evolving health industry?

Since inception, United Hospital has served more than 500,000 registered patients and conducted almost 14,000 Heart Surgeries with a commendable success rate. More than 55,000 Cardiac procedures, 295,000 Hemodialysis, 185,000 Radiation Therapy Sessions & 196,000 Health Checkups completed. It has a wide range of dedicated staff consisting of Doctors, nurses, medical assistants, specialists from different fields all working towards providing the best care for our patients in any given scenario. United Hospital is a subsidiary of United Group. They are the second-largest power producer in the private sector in the country, having established schools, universities, nursing, and medical colleges, and retail services. Their CSR arm operates eight small to medium-sized hospitals catering to different healthcare needs.

#### How is United Hospital dealing with the surge of Covid-19 infected patients as the pandemic continues to ravage the country?

As soon as the virus was first detected and spreading across countries, we

kept liaison with our Governing bodies, UN agencies like WHO and UNDP to be on the same page in terms of understanding and awareness. Without wasting any time, we formed a high-level Corona Prevention Committee within the hospital to set the direction in line with the national technical committee. We developed clinical protocols and designed service standards, operating models, and made various necessary arrangements. One of the most important tasks was to raise the bar of awareness amongst the staff. We tried to be innovative using different e-channels to disseminate the information and raise awareness. Also, a very challenging job was to arrange all the safety measures such as PPE and motivate staff to give the services to the Covid patients. We arranged free-of-cost treatment facilities for the staff. To reduce the chance of cross-contamination, we had to arrange all the necessities like two different sets of equipment, amenities, staff including doctors, nurses, and other servicing staff.

All of these aided us to arrange two completely segregated zones for Covid and Non-Covid patients. So, in a way, we started operating two parallel hospitals under the same roof.



**With a lot of resources being allocated to Covid-19 response and infected patients, how are you handling patients with other cases?**

There was a very comprehensive assessment to find our Covid suspected patients and we arranged and marked spaces for them in our entry points like Emergency and OPD flu corner. Also, we made it mandatory as part of the protocol to do the Covid test for every patient who was given admission. So, over a while, we learned and improved the overall process which helped us to reduce cross-contamination of Covid-19 across the hospital. In the process, we have already served more than 3000 patients in the OPD areas and more than 65,000 patients on the OPD basis.

**How is Covid-19 affecting the healthcare industry in Bangladesh, and how are other healthcare actors responding to this?**

Covid-19 is asking us all to revisit the whole thing. We need proper strategic planning and direction at the macro level. Government cannot solve the problem alone, the private sector should come forward from their social responsibility and work with the Government together. There is a clear intention to develop a new industry. The referral policy has to be properly defined across the country.



Our healthcare system should be redesigned with emphasis on customer care and user friendly approaches. Major two areas that require special attention for this type of patient is proper diagnosis of the disease and at the same time giving right clarity to enable them to make their own decisions. There is a serious lack of skilled healthcare service providers in our country due to the large population. Inevitably, we do not have a choice but to focus on developing local institutions like hospitals, medical and nursing colleges, diagnostic centers, suffering Medical trainings etc. The private sector must actively find opportunities to present their ideas to the Government and gain permission to build centers. The Government can also help them with policy support to establish hospitals and mitigate the challenges that are presently faced in this sector.

**Covid-19 is impacting work operations and services for organizations across many industries, how is United Hospital dealing with such changes?**

United Hospital has developed different service packages like pre and

post-Covid awareness and rehabilitation programs. We are also doing a lot of awareness sessions with different corporations, Government of Bangladesh with other organizations are actively engaged. In addition, we developed a unique service model to give first-hand services to Covid patients even in outpatient services.

**Does United Hospital provide telehealth services? If yes, for which cases would you recommend telehealth services, and is it effective for Covid-19 cases?**

United Hospital has launched Telemedicine since March 2020. OPD consultation is used for diagnostic tests for that reason we also have extended our doorstep sample collection and if the patient requires hospitalization, only then they have to come to the hospital. So, in a way, telemedicine service has been very effective for Covid-19 cases.

**How is United Hospital keeping up with global healthcare advancements?**

We have held many workshops, symposiums, and conferences to enhance the knowledge of our physicians and nurses. It created awareness among the caregivers and made them act promptly and proactively whenever the situation demands. We constantly upgrade the existing resources and ensure that the latest technology is being used by our caregivers with customized orientation process.

**Where do you see United Hospital in the future of healthcare in Bangladesh?**

United Group is highly committed to healthcare. The Group has established two medical colleges and a hospital in Bangladesh, as well as eight other rural hospitals & clinics with basic diagnostic capability that are fully operated and funded by United Trust. In the next three years, three more hospitals will start their operations under the umbrella of the United Group, which would equate to 1,700 functional beds. Under United Trust over 160,000 patients have been treated just last year.

Our country is populous and treating the mass population in hospitals is not a feasible solution to our collective health problems. Our plan is also to work for raising awareness among people to adopt a healthier lifestyle. Prevention can only lessen the disease burden. However, if medical attention is still needed, we will give the required support required. The pace at which our physicians and other caregivers rose to the occasion to face the challenges of COVID-19 gives us hope that a well-developed healthcare system is very much possible to have in our country.

I dream of a day when Bangladesh healthcare sector will be a hub of medical tourism, when patients from other countries will come to our country and to our hospitals for treatment.