

WAITING ROOM BLUES

Patient running out of patience

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Doctors justify failing to keep appointments by blaming unscheduled emergency calls, but patients are running out of patience.

Rupali Dean, a resident of DLF Phase-II, says, "If I have been given a time, obviously I will expect the doctor to honour the time. It's a different matter that I wait because there is no choice. Time is money."



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—RUPALI DEAN,
Gurgaon resident

The availability of "good doctors" is far less compared to the demand in the country though that does not quite justify why the doctors make the patients wait.

According to a WHO estimate, India will need additional 7.5 lakh beds by 2012 to meet minimum needs of hospital beds. Currently, to meet the deficiency in the country 29 per cent more specialists are needed in the country. In this scenario, patients are left with no choices but to wait for their turn.

"It is out of compulsion that one has to wait for the doctor. But I would like the doctors to attend to us on the appointed time. It's all about keeping commitment which they should," Yavnik, a resident of Palam Vihar and a class X student of Chiranjeev Bharati School, said.



Fifteen minutes to half-an-hour delay from the appointment time in case of a doctor is understandable given the nature of their jobs. But any further delay should be informed to the patients in advance.

—MANAV SUKHIYA,
MNC employee

"If the doctor gets an emergency call, it is understandable. But most of the time this is not the case," she added.

Some residents, however, don't mind waiting for the good health care.

"I don't mind waiting for a few hours for my doctor. Because I know, even if I wait, I will get the best care," Lalit Bhatt, a resident of DLF Phase-IV, says.

Call of duty takes us away: doctors

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Ever had to wait endlessly for a doctor despite taking an appointment days in advance? It invariably happens with most of us. Although doctors have their own justifications, as service providers shouldn't they value your time?

Says Dr Deepak Raheja, a psychiatrist at Paras Hospital in Gurgaon, "Patient don't mind waiting when they are sure they will get the best service at the end of it." Don't you mind?

In Dr Raheja's own words, "My patients sometimes have to wait for three/ four hours from the appointment time. But they don't complain. This is because they understand that the duration of a patient's session with doctor can't be time-bound. In some cases it can be a few minutes while in others it could stretch much longer."

The nature of a doctor's service is different from any others. "Clinical precision can't be clock precision. I can't see the clock while seeing a patient," Dr Raheja, who has been practicing for the last 10 years, says.

Probably, doctors should give sufficient time-gap between two patients so that the wait period is less.



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—DR SANJEEV BAGAI

"That's exactly what we do. But one must understand the unscheduled call of emergency duty," Dr Sanjeev Bagai, head of Paediatrics in Delhi's Rockland Hospital, says, adding that care is taken that the patient doesn't have to wait for too long.

But doctors have specific surgery and OPD days? "That is for elective procedures only. Emergencies come unannounced," Dr Bagai says.

"The wait is not something that happens to patients in India only. It is there everywhere," Dr Bagai, who has worked in New York and Sydney as well, says.

According to the doctors, patients are also to blame for schedules going haywire in many cases. "Many patients don't honour the commitment to turn up at the appointed time. Here, people have the excuse of massive traffic jam. Several others come without appointment," Dr Bagai says.

Some patients try to jump the queue by throwing names while others pretend that their case is an emergency.

Not honouring time commitment is a very natural thing in Indian context. "It's in our culture. Why to single out the doctors only," Sriram Khanna, managing editor, Consumer Voice, says.