

Surgeon's heart beats for the poor

Dhaval Bharwad

'Dr Dabbawala' Has Been Sending Tiffin Boxes For Needy Patients For 15 Years

Radha Sharma | TNN

Ahmedabad: This doctor not only treats but also feeds patients! In UN Mehta Institute of Cardiology and Research, every evening nearly 50-odd poor people and their relatives who have undergone heart surgery get home-made food for free.

These people are so poor, they can hardly afford treatment. Spending Rs 35-55 for a meal outside the Civil Hospital campus seems like blasphemy to them.

This dinner is provided gratis by cardiac surgeon Dr Bhupesh Shah who no longer works with UN Mehta Institute but has been sending tiffin for over a decade-and-a-half.

"When I joined UN Mehta Hospital, there was no internal mess for food. I would see patient's relatives, especially those from other states, carry food in unhygienic plastic bags. I decided to pitch in and arranged food for seven patients. Over the years, their number has



KINDNESS CURE: Dr Bhupesh Shah

grown to 50-70 food packets a day. I left the hospital for private practice but the tiffin reach there on time every evening," says Dr Shah who is a consultant at VS Hospital, HCG and other hospitals.

Interestingly, the food packets provide twin relief. The contract to prepare and supply the tiffin has been given to an auto-rickshaw driver who gets a financial breather to run his family of four.

"My wife and mother together cook the food that I

distribute. This extra income helps my sons get better schooling. Dr Shah has asked me never to ask the identity of the people who are given the meals," says Pragnesh Gajjar, resident of Meghaninagar.

Earlier, Dr Shah would take donations for the service but ever since his practice has expanded, he funds the entire exercise himself. Meanwhile, the 'doctor with a heart' has also found other avenues of charity to reach out to a cross-section of people.

The foremost of his initiatives is to perform cardiac

procedures at subsidized cost for the poor patients at a private hospital. A procedure which costs Rs 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh is performed for anywhere between Rs 25,000 and Rs 75,000.

"I used to work in car accessory showroom but have been unemployed for the past many months. I would not have been able to afford a bypass surgery in a good hospital. By Allah's grace, the doctor has helped me. I hope to get well and start earning for my family again," says Dildar Hussain, one of the beneficiaries.

Dr Bhupesh Shah has also pooled resources and sent out seasonal utility kits containing toothpaste, soap, oil, socks, scarves, light clothing and warmers to visually and physically challenged children as well as inmates of three old age homes in Ahmedabad. There are around 800 kits crammed in his home ready to be delivered.

"For each distribution programme, I take fresh employees so that they imbibe the feeling of giving themselves and the cycle of charity keeps moving," says Dr Shah.

Dr Shah says he imbibed philanthropy from his parents and especially takes time out to plan charity events to give back to society.

"All people who carve an identity for themselves and enjoy a certain standing in society should attempt to give back to society," he says.



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