

A QUICK FIX

BY KAVITA DEVGAN

The dengue platelet count test normally takes a minimum of 8 hours in most hospitals and pathology labs. At the Urgent Care clinic on New Delhi's Vikas Marg which opened on 30 October, it takes less than half an hour.

Patiently waiting for medical care is something that is second nature to anyone who has had deal with India's overburdened system. A new healthcare company called Aapka Urgicare, founded by Pervez Ahmed, former CEO of Max Healthcare, is planning to change that by establishing clinics which focus only on emergency care—pre-hospitalization treatment and stabilization of a patient.

Dr Ahmed says their next centre will be inaugurated in the first week of December, in New Delhi.

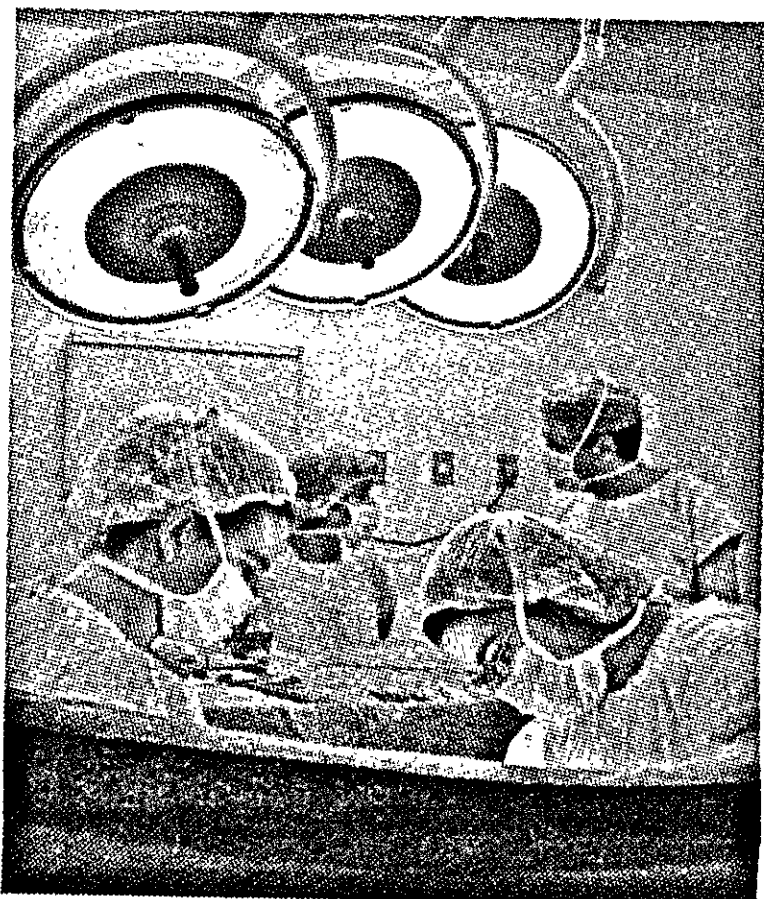
"We plan to open 30-34 centres in Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region) in the next 20-24 months, and about 110 in north and east India in the next four years," he says.

A typical Urgent Care centre will be a small hospital with 10 beds, open 24 hours. "Designed to operate like emergency trauma centres, these clinics will be equipped with the latest technology and will be outfitted to handle all kinds of medical emergencies," says Anjum Ahmed, director of Urgent Care. "For critical patients, who require further intensive care once we have stabilized them, we will facilitate their smooth transfer to hospitals and nursing homes in the vicinity."

Located in densely populated localities, the centres will also offer OPD clinics, preventive screening, basic diagnostics and vaccinations. So, whether one requires a nebulizer, IV fluids, stabilization of heart or lungs, casts for fractures, stitches, or treatment for acute allergies, these clinics will be equipped to attend to all pre-hospital emergency needs.

"According to me 70% of the people who walk into emergency rooms of hospitals do not require hospitalization, yet they have to pay for the fact that they are in a hospital," says Dr Pervez Ahmed. "We are going to cut those costs by up to five times."

One critical area where Urgent Care hopes to make a difference is in the treatment available to a patient in the "golden hour", the first 60 minutes after a medical emergency, where the chances of survival are the highest. According to a 2006 report in the *Indian Journal of Surgery*, 80% of trauma and accident victims do not get help during the golden hour.



New centres: *For emergency care.*