

EpiHC: Healthcare Principles in Practice



Baby Memorial Hospital (BMH) India



Signatory since April 2021

K. G. Alexander, a physician in India, founded Baby Memorial Hospital (BMH) in 1987, with the aim of improving access to quality care. He named the hospital after his father, who was known affectionately by the nickname “Baby.” The launch of BMH marked a revolution in Kerala towards a more patient-centered, inclusive, and responsive approach to healthcare, says Gracy Mathai, the hospital’s chief executive officer. Starting with 52 beds in a rented building, BMH grew over the next 55 years into a comprehensive healthcare center with 600 beds, more than 40 specialized departments and research centers, a college of nursing, and Kerala’s first integrated burn center. The hospital has earned a reputation for strictly following ethical principles in its day-to-day activities, prioritizing patient care, and service to humanity. In this interview, Ms. Mathai explains why the hospital became an EpiHC signatory, what it does to promote ethical behavior and quality care, and why it’s important to create indicators to measure performance.



BECOMING A SIGNATORY



GRACY MATHAI
Chief Executive Officer

MATHAI:

At Baby Memorial, we strongly believe in ethics, quality, transparency, and patient safety. The 10 principles of EPIHC attracted us to join as a way to promote ethical practices and to learn from others. EPIHC's approach complements ours in terms of making ethical behavior a standard part of how we do business.

THE PRINCIPLES

#3 Promoting High-Quality Standards

MATHAI:

To support high-quality standards and patient safety, we have staff people who also are our "Quality and Safety Champions" in all clinical and nonclinical areas. We observe "World Quality Day" and "International Patient Safety Day," when we present opportunities to learn about quality and safety in healthcare. We also invite patients and their relatives to share feedback about their experiences with us. We have learning events and competitions to test people's knowledge, and we offer opportunities for patients and their relatives to talk about their experiences in the hospital.

#6 Upholding Patients' Rights

MATHAI:

We have instituted many practices at BMH to promote patient rights. Patients' rights are documented and displayed prominently throughout the hospital in both English and

Malayalam, Kerala's state language. Patients and relatives are also informed about their rights, both verbally and via handouts. Telephone numbers are displayed throughout the hospital designating who to contact if these rights are violated. Oral and written feedback from patients and employees is collected, collated, and analyzed. Appropriate corrective and preventive actions are taken monthly. In addition, the entire staff is trained and retrained on patient rights.

#9 Protecting and Empowering Staff

MATHAI:

Every measure is taken to protect staff. Personal protective equipment is provided so that staff members can keep themselves and their work areas safe. We have not lost even a single staff member due to COVID.

Staff are also empowered to take action to maintain a safe environment. Every nursing station and department has a protocol in place that enables staff to escalate their concerns to more senior people in the hospital without fearing punishment. The hospital places great importance on protecting patient and staff safety and we appreciate and recognize our staff for raising issues of concern.

#10 Supporting Ethical Practices and Preventing Harm

MATHAI:

We strongly believe in this principle and many of our practices reflect it. We encourage a

multidisciplinary approach to treating and managing critically ill patients. For example, we have a tumor board that collaborates on treatment and management decisions for cancer patients. Their options do not depend only on the consulting physician under whom the patient was admitted. Another example involves the purchase of medical equipment. We conduct a vendor analysis and selection process before issuing a purchase order. No one, not even the clinicians, is given the unilateral power to decide the type of equipment to be purchased for their department. It is always a collaborative decision.

ASSESSING AND EVALUATING PROGRESS

MATHAI:

We feel proud to be part of this initiative. We want to actively participate in EPIHC, to share our practices with others, and to encourage other hospitals to join EPIHC. We are developing critical indicators to measure, monitor, and audit our success and corrective actions in achieving the principles. We believe that regular risk assessment helps prevent hazards in advance and mitigate problems when they do happen.