

Honorable Mention

case 1-429-388
April 1, 2014

The Jaipur Foot: Challenges in Leading a Free Service Organization

It was around 9:00 a.m. and patients were being admitted at the Sawai Mansingh Hospital (SMS) in Jaipur, India, where the not-for-profit organization (NPO) Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS), better known for its product—the Jaipur Foot (JF)—was located. Streams of people with different kinds of locomotive disabilities were admitted daily. A few had traveled more than a thousand kilometers to reach the center.

Anybody could walk in at any time and register even with the security guard. The registration process was simple: a staff member walked around with a registration book in which the patient's name was noted, along with his/her disability. Patients were first admitted as they arrived and then registered without regard to time or filling in tedious details on a form, unlike in other health-care systems where registration preceded admission. The patients were asked a few questions, such as "Where have you come from?" "What do you do?" "Who is accompanying you?" and so on. This simple process was all that was needed to register for a free prosthetic limb, a caliper, or other aids and appliances.

Some patients, particularly those in need of tricycles and economic assistance for self-employment, were retained at the SMS Jaipur Foot center. Other amputees and polio patients in need of calipers were moved in ambulances to BMVSS's second facility—the Jaipur Foot center at Malviya Nagar, Jaipur, located about six kilometers away from the SMS center. At the SMS Jaipur foot center, once the registration process was completed, measurements would be taken. The customized shank/socket would then be fabricated and fitted with the Jaipur Foot piece. The patients were usually discharged on the same day or at the most within three days. If there was a delay in the fitting, the patients and their caretakers were provided free boarding and lodging.



Many of the technicians and employees (around 150 in all) working at the BMVSS were victims of locomotive accidents, and they all wore a Jaipur Foot. In its 37 years, BMVSS had fitted approximately 425,000 artificial limbs and over 350,000 calipers at its Jaipur center and 20 other branches spread over the country.¹ Other aids and appliances, such as hand-paddled tricycles, wheelchairs, crutches etc, provided by BMVSS had helped about 525,000 disabled people in India.² In all, over 1.3 million disabled people in India



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