

Interview: Loic Fretard, Hospital Director, Medcover Hospital, Poland

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Medcover Hospital opened in 2009. What conditions in the Polish market encouraged Medcover to open a multi-profile modern hospital?

Medcover began operations in 1994 and pioneered the Polish private upscale market in Poland. Our core business is health services, which include outpatient clinics, memberships, insurance, etc. While Medcover was successfully developing, our portfolio did not include an in-patient facility. In the past, when our customers suffered acute medical conditions, we had to partner with a hospital to maintain a continuity of care, as we could not accommodate them. The decision to open an in-patient facility occurred in 2005-2006; construction began in 2007, and we opened our doors in July of 2009.

Today, Medcover Hospital offers a wide range of medical care in seven departments, which include: women’s health, obstetrics, children’s health, cardiology, internal medicine, surgery, and anesthesiology. We also have a consultation center and a diagnostics center equipped with an MRI machine, CT scan, mammography, X-ray, and much more all on site. Our services and capabilities reinvented the Polish perception of private hospitals. Historically, private hospitals were seen as small five to ten bed facilities that catered to one-day procedures. To achieve what we have now took spectacular effort to overcome this primitive view of private hospital care. We built a brand new hospital that envies the best in Western Europe, we provided twenty-four hour care, and were the first ones to establish a neonatology department and ICU for newborns. Our newborn ICU provides neonatologists on site that gives the means to care for premature and newborn babies. Our unique offerings as a private healthcare provider has helped us break the previous perception of private hospital care.

Medcover Hospital prides itself on providing the best care with the best-qualified doctors and nurses. What makes Medcover doctors better than public doctors?

Polish doctors are exposed to international standards and practical methodologies. We put more attention on doctor qualifications because as the main providers of healthcare, our doctors have the values to treat patients as more than a clinical case. Our doctors also maintain strong

communication with our nurses in order to provide an informative and empathetic service. Medcover patients expect to be the main priority and to be informed of the issue regarding their medical care. With our medical staff, we can work effectively to ensure that patient stays are as short as appropriately possible so that they may relax in the comforts of their own home.

Medcover has a partnership with the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, helping organize nursing studies. What is the added value for patients from this partnership?

Two years ago, Medcover signed an agreement to be a partner in nursing education. In Poland, the past ten years has seen significant changes in nursing education. New regulations for a nursing certificate, in alignment of European standards, require three years of studies. As a leading medical provider in Poland, it is in our interests to find partnerships that value the importance of nursing care. Medcover hospital is one of the places where nursing students are assessed on their work in different departments. We will graduate our first class of nurses under this partnership in June. Additionally, we offer a one-year course to bring experienced nurses in line with European regulations. Last year was the first year we certified people and it benefits us because these nurses improve their skills and further understand how we manage day-to-day patient care procedures.

Expatriates and foreigners make up a significant proportion of hospital business. Why is Medcover a preferred hospital of choice for foreigners?

Medcover Group used to be a members-only system. We made the decision to open the hospital to the public so that all Polish people could come to receive treatments. Our diverse clientele includes Medcover members, Polish citizens, National Health Fund (NFZ) patients, and foreigners. Warsaw houses over ninety thousand foreigners who identify the Medcover Hospital as a place where they can receive the same type of medical care that they are used to in their own countries. In addition, most of our doctors, customer service staff and nursing are able to speak English, which is useful and appreciated by our foreign patients.

As a Swedish group with headquarters in Brussels, we have connections to international markets. We started to receive European nationals looking for high quality health solutions at a lower price. Other foreigners who visit us are looking to skip queues in their own country. We treated over 50-60 patients from Norway, Sweden, Ukraine, Belarus, the UK, and Belgium. Every cross-border case we treat contributes to enhancing Poland's reputation as medical destination. We became a partner to the Ministry of Economy's three-year program to recognize Poland as a destination of health. Medcover supports this program because it promotes Poland, Medcover Group, and our hospital.

The hospital is part of a parent group that offers various health services. What is Medcover Group's strategy?

Medcover is the leader on the private healthcare market in Central and Eastern Europe. We started our operation in 1994. The aim of our existence is to help people achieve and maintain good health conditions. Medcover provides its patients with comprehensive healthcare, including outpatient services, laboratory diagnostics and full hospital care.

Currently, we look after over half a million people. We monitor and assess, on an ongoing basis, new investment possibilities that suit the profile of our company's development, and contribute new value to the care we offer. Thanks to this, we strengthen Medcover Group's position on the private healthcare market in Poland. In 2010, we incorporated into Medcover Group a network of infertility treatment clinics, Invimed, which perfectly complements our gynecology and obstetrics offer. Another example of how we build a comprehensive offer for clients was the establishment in 2013 of Care Experts, a company that offers a system of extensive care for the elderly or those who

cannot live on their own. The decision was taken on the basis of analysis of the needs of Medicover's existing patients who asked about the possibility of providing such services for their loved ones.

In total, Medicover Group includes the following brands in Poland: Medicover, Medicover Ubezpieczenia, Synevo, Centrum Medyczne Damiana, Medicopharma pharmacies, Europejskie Centrum MacierzyÅ?stwa InviMed, Centra Medyczne DantexMed and Care Experts. We also hold a stake in Carolina Medical Center.

We believe our 20 years of service is a strong message that accentuates our long-term commitment to the people of Poland.

What innovative treatments does Medicover Hospital offer?

Our medical team operates with modern and advanced technology and the best drug treatments available on the market. Our new and innovative medical facility, great medical team, and access to a plethora of treatments give us a competitive advantage. Last year, we signed a partnership with a well-known pharmaceutical company to conduct a phase-two study on the link of hematology to lymphoma. Their team assessed and certified our facility, ready to welcome first patients for this clinical study.

In your perspective, could you assess the quality of available medicines and innovative treatments in Poland?

The overall Polish healthcare system is quite good. Of course, there are flaws, but Poland is equipped to treat almost any disease. The flaws in the system stem from historically poor investment in the public health institutions. The need for reorganization and investment will address the majority of these flaws. I believe that the private sector is developing and can be a reliable partner for the public health authorities.

The Polish health authorities are launching new regulations to adapt to the ever-changing health care environment. They are creating a health agency that will be responsible for defining the healthcare map by regions and their respective needs. This agency will also work on medical standard definitions and medical accreditations. This agency will essentially reshape the entire health system. This makes sense because the weakness of the system lies within the fact that payment is not reflective of outcome. For example, a five-bed "so called hospital" that has poor conditions and no comprehensive medical set up will receive the same funding as Medicover Hospital. There is no connection between payment and efficiency of medical care (ensuring the patient can get well enough to recover at home as soon as possible). Whether you provide a good or bad service, whether you have established a critical care unit for patient safety, you receive the same funding. I hope the new regulations will lead to good medical outcomes and good customer service for the patients and their families. These goals are employed by the private sector to achieve high patient satisfaction.

What are the main ambitions for Medicover Hospital for the next five years?

Medicover Hospital has earned its reputation in the first five years of operations. We are the trusted reference hospital for citizens in Warsaw and the surrounding areas. In the future, we believe we can expand our cooperation with the NFZ to offer more treatments and to diversify our groups of patients. Oncology is one of our key priorities. We will continue to develop our core business in women's health and pediatrics. As the only private provider in Warsaw with an inpatient pediatrics ward, it is our responsibility to devote more resources to these areas. This strategy will allow us to accommodate families and this adds to our competitive advantage. At the end of the day, we are to

serve the patient first and foremost.

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