

# Hospitals fill up, both non-Covid and Covid patients struggle to find beds

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THE CITY is staring at a health-care crisis, with ICU beds for a growing number of Covid as well as non-Covid patients in short supply. Families have been running from one hospital to another to get admission not just in ICUs, but also in general wards.

At Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in old Rajinder Nagar, Sameer Narula (45), resident of Ramesh Nagar and a teacher at a private school, recounted his struggle to admit his 72-year-old father-in-law — who was having difficulty in breathing — at a hospital. "On Saturday night, we took him to Acharya Shree Bhikshu Government Hospital at Moti Nagar, where he was declared a Covid suspect after an antigen test. They referred him to Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital (RML), but we wished to get him admitted to a private facility," he said.

Consulting the Delhi Corona App, they left for MGS Super Speciality Hospital at Punjabi Bagh the same night, where they were told beds were not available. Hospital authorities told *The Indian Express* they did not have vacant ICU beds.

The family then went to the Khetarpal Hospital, Bali Nagar (which does not have Covid facilities, as per the app), and called up Kalra Hospital, Kirti Nagar, which also said they did not have any beds. "We went to RML hospital, but even there they had no beds. They referred us to Lok Nayak



Testing underway at a hospital in Defence Colony. Amit Mehra

Hospital. But we decided to come to Ganga Ram — we reached here at 4.30 am Sunday, and thankfully got a bed," said Narula.

Dr Pawan, a senior medical officer at RML, said, "No beds are available right now, it is full. The app is not real-time. The situation at the hospital is dynamic, with patients being shifted between wards as per requirement."

The Delhi government had filed a petition in the Supreme Court last week, asking it to allow its order to earmark 80% of all ICU beds in the city for Covid patients. The order was stayed by the Delhi High Court. Government officials are now waiting for the court to

hear the matter. "Till then, our hands are tied. We have made our intent very clear," said a senior government official who did not want to be named.

There are 16,150 beds for Covid patients in hospitals, out of which 8,064 (50%) are occupied at the moment. Of 1,261 ICU beds with ventilators, only 240 (19%) are available, while only 403 out of 2,044 Covid ICU beds without ventilators are available.

Critical care facilities are largely full at many top private hospitals and at a few government-run facilities as well. ICU beds with ventilators are not available at GTB, Safdarjung, DUU,

Northern railway and Sardar Patel Covid Army hospitals.

But it is not only Covid patients who are struggling.

Bablu (42), who works as a sweeper and is a resident of Mehrauli, took his 41-year-old brother, a safai karamchari working for the municipality, to Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, on Saturday after he vomited blood. On Sunday, he said, "Doctors said he needs an ICU bed but there is no availability till Monday afternoon. We don't know what to do."

The hospital said availability of beds is indicated on the Delhi Corona app regularly.