

# WHY HOSPITALS SHOULD GO IN FOR ISO 9002 CERTIFICATION

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## **Summary**

Till recently ISO 9002 certification was restricted to the Industrial sector with improvements in out look of hospitals and increased consumer awareness hospitals have now started working towards ISO 9002 certification. In a service industry like hospitals ISO 9002 certification has tremendous benefits and applications and this article addresses these issues.

## **Introduction**

The ISO 9000 series is an International set of quality standards laid down to bring about uniformity in practices and documentation of systems in use in an organization. In a competitive world, striving for excellence in every sphere as we march towards the 21st century, the ISO 9000 certification has become an International stamp of quality and recognition of an organization's practices and procedures.

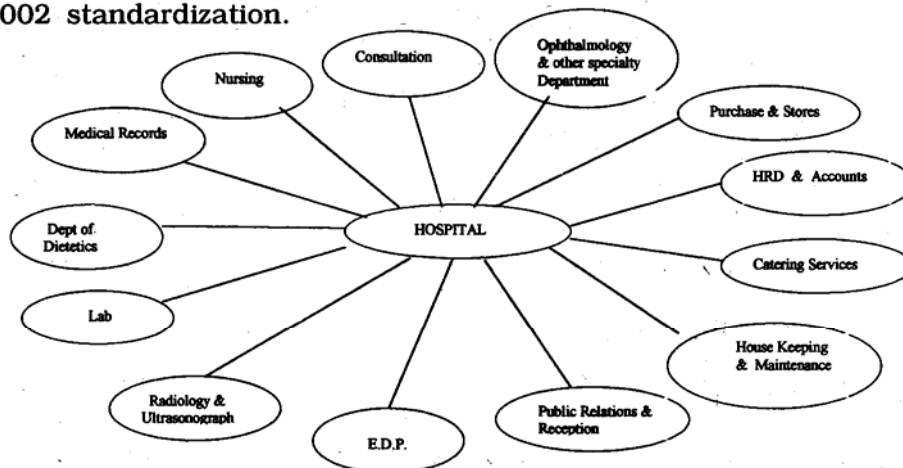
Hitherto the ISO 9000 certification was limited to the industrial sector. With the changing trends in medicine in the health care sector, the increasing awareness of the patient regarding quality

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medical services, and the quest for patient satisfaction, hospitals have now begun to realise the advantages of adopting a systematic way of functioning through ISO standardization.

However many officials in the hospital sector are still a bit nervous and sceptical, about introducing ISO activities in to the medical field. They are still not convinced about the impact of ISO on improving the running of hospital efficiently. In this article we hope to convince the reader about the necessity of introducing ISO 9000 procedures into the hospital sector based on our experience at the M.V. Diabetes Specialities Centre at Gopalapuram, Chennai which has recently become one of the world's first ISO 9002 certified diabetes hospitals. The ISO 9002 series embodies comprehensive Quality Management concepts and guidance, together the standards are packaged under a harmonised and easy to use numbering system which are particularly applicable in the service sector like a hospital. What has to be realized at this juncture is that ISO standards helps us to standardize the services rendered to the patients and also to have documented procedures. This helps the organization's procedures and practices to be system driven and not dependent on any single individual. Let us now look at some of the departments in a hospital and analyze the way in which ISO could lead to improving the quality of that department.

Fig. 1 lists some of the departments which can be brought under ISO 9002 standardization.



IN HOSPITAL SERVICES WHICH CAN BE BROUGHT UNDER ISO PROCEDURES

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### **Medical Records:**

Medical records are folders which hold information regarding diagnosis and treatment. In many cases these records are not handled with the required care resulting in incomplete records, missing forms, illegible handwriting, unclear and unaccountable statements and improper filing. By introducing ISO 9002 certification, uniform methods and standards are brought into practice. Responsibility can be brought in at every level by affixing the signature of the person who does the investigation.

It is remarkable that even examination done by doctors can be standardized, thus avoiding any wrong interpretation, missing diagnosis and unnecessary variation in patient care practices. For e.g. every doctor at our centre now checks the blood pressure (BP) only in the right arm in sitting position of the patient with the arm resting on the table. This is the extent to which one can standardize procedures and practices so that uniformity is maintained and results can be compared between doctors. Talking of blood pressure again, the BP machine also needs to be calibrated for ISO, but more of that later. This is only to point out how a single procedure like checking a BP can produce widely fluctuating results in the hands of different doctors using different practices and adopting different techniques.

### **Laboratory**

There are a plethora of laboratories in and around Chennai giving varied results for the same sample. Being service oriented do we not have a major responsibility to ensure that the results generated by our laboratories are absolutely precise and reproducible? ISO 9002 sets these standards and ensure quality results by the following methods.

- Use of state-of-the art equipments and statistical process controls which are systematically inspected and regularly calibrated help to obtain, accurate and reliable results.
- Cumulative Quality control charts such as the Levy Jennings plots to ensure that the results are within an accepted limit. If there is a deviation beyond this point, built in programmes ensure that they can be corrected. The control values of tests are sent to external laboratories for assessment.

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- Periodical validation of results to avoid Inter and Intra observer variations.
- Displaying operating instructions of every equipment by the side of the equipment help to train even fresh recruits.
- Avoiding breakdown costs through regular preventive maintenance
- Compulsory calibration of all equipments and maintenance of such calibration records.

**Lab Disposal:**

Cleanliness and hygiene must form part of quality care in the hospital. Hospital-acquired infection can further aggravate the patient's disability! A major source of such infection is haphazard disposal of excrement, urine and other body fluid resulting in high risk of cross infections. This may occur due to contact with such infectious wastes. splash of these body fluids and airborne infectious aerosols contaminating utensils, test tubes etc which are used which are used without proper cleaning. How are we going to address this problem? Efficient cleanign with high impact washing water followed by moist steam heat destroys any pathogens remaining on the test tubes and other surfaces. The containers and cuvettes at MVDSC are washed using an ultrasonic cleaner to prevent any such infection. Samples collected are disposed off after treatment with proper disinfectants. A closed system disposal equipment (incinerator) is installed to get rid of infectious wastes. Needle tips are incinerated through the needle burner/cutter and then packed separately, labelled and handed over to the municipal corporation cleaners.

**Internal Quality Audit:**

A team of qualified and certified Internal Auditors from the organization look into Internal Quality audies. This quality control team is entrusted with the job of maintaining quality services at every level. This system is considered the most effective method available for not only assuring the documented procedures but also detecting deviations from specifications and since the auditors are part of the organization, any deviation in the practices can be detected efficiently and corrective measures can be ensured. This also ensures a healthy

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competition within departments to try to have zero 'non-conformities' during such audits.

### Customers:

Interaction with customers will enable to solve their problems and help to develop quality - oriented technologies. This can reduce health care costs while providing customer satisfaction. A satisfied customer is an image builder of the organization. Undoubtedly the organization not only builds its own image and good-will but also develops its services through this quality certification. The hospitals thus earns customer loyalty because it aims to continuously satisfy its customers.

As indicated in Fig. 2, ISO 9002 certification leads to quality results.

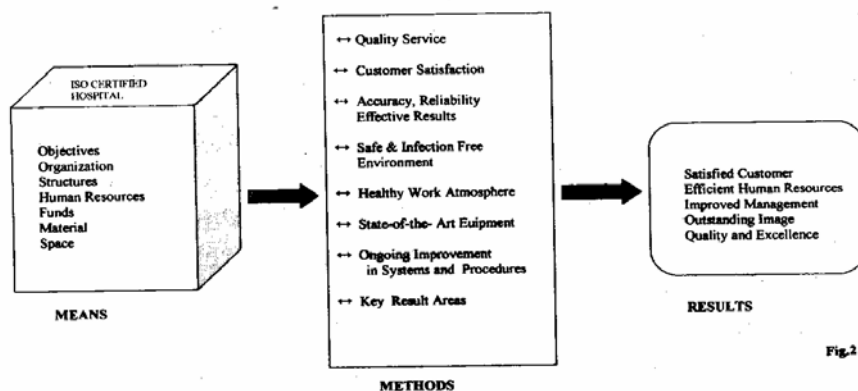


Fig.2

To summarize the benefits ISO certificates in hospitals include:

1. Standardizing procedures in various departments
2. Documentation of procedure at all levels
3. Interdepartmental integration and co-operation thus enhancing customer satisfaction and services.
4. Better time management to reduce patient waiting time.
5. Enhancing courteous relationships between hospital staff and patients.
6. Creating enthusiasm and responsibility among staff members.
7. Assessing patient satisfaction at various levels.

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8. Taking preventive and corrective action to maintain quality services and customer satisfaction.
9. Brain storming sessions helps not only to solve problems but builds up confidence level among management and staff.
10. Lastly, corrective action taken after internal audits is the only was towards improvement of services.

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