

# Govt. hospitals facing ventilator shortage

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**BENGALURU:** While ventilator support in private hospitals is out of reach for many given their exorbitant costs, government hospitals in the city are battling a severe shortage of the life support systems. Monday's tragic case of one-and-a-half-year-old Gagana Venkatesh, who died after her parents shuffled between hospitals to get her emergency care, highlights the plight of hundreds of patients who face the same problem.

Private hospitals charge a fee anywhere between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 30,000 a day for an ICU bed. Ventilator charges and other additional facilities that the patient may need will only take this up. Although the same facility is available for less than Rs. 1,500 in a government hospital, the problem is that the ICU beds and ventilators are always full because of high demand.

This situation often compels patients to shuttle between hospitals. For instance, Srirampuran resident R. Sundar first admitted his mother to a private hospital in Rajajinagar, but wanted to shift to a government facility as he was unable to bear the hospital bill. Unable to find an ICU bed in any government hospitals, Mr. Sundar had to finally admit her in a charitable hospi-



*ICU beds were full in all government hospitals in the city while only one ventilator was available in the Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital on Tuesday. - FILE PHOTO*

tal. "At least the cost in a charitable hospital is less than what I paid in the private hospital," he added.

So where do all the poor patients who cannot afford critical care in a private hospital go to? Can the problem be resolved by adding more ICU beds and ventilators in government hospitals? "It is more important to strengthen and optimally use the existing facilities. Merely adding more ventilators will not serve the purpose. To run these facilities, the hospital should also have adequate number of supporting staff, including nurses and technicians," said C.N. Manjunath, Director of Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardio-

vascular Sciences and Research.

P. Satishchandra, Director of NIMHANS, said that although it was easy to add more number of ventilators to the ICU, running the facility with adequate number of supporting staff would be a costly affair. "The hidden costs of running an ICU bed, excluding the doctors' fee, will be around Rs. 10,000 a day while we charge only Rs. 1,000 a day," he said. Sudarshan Ballal, Medical Director of Manipal Hospitals, who admitted that critical care in a private hospital is expensive, said no patient should be refused treatment during emergencies just because he is not able to

## HOSPITALS & VENTILATORS

Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research **150**

NIMHANS **35**

Victoria Hospital **10**

Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital **14**

Vani Vias Hospital **6**

Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health **11**

K.C. General Hospital **7**

## INTENSIVE CARE UNIT SHOULD HAVE

➤ Qualified intensivists and nurses trained in ICU management

➤ Ideally, nurse-patient ratio should be at least 1:3

➤ Uninterrupted supply of life-saving drugs and disposables

➤ Mobile X-ray unit

➤ Respiratory and anaesthesia technicians

## 10-bed ICUs in district hospitals planned

Muralidhara Khajane

**BENGALURU:** The State government is committed to establishing 10-bed Intensive Care Units (ICU) in all district hospitals, with facilities including ventilators, said Minister for Health and Family Welfare U.T. Khader. Addressing presspersons here on Tuesday, the Minister said that efforts would be made to establish fully equipped five to six bedded ICUs in some of the taluk hospitals too.

Refuting the allegation of "negligence" by doctors of Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, which resulted in the death of a child on Monday, Mr. Khader said the hospital had 11 ventilators in its ICU and all the equipment were in good order.

"The hospital staff put the child on ventilator by shifting another patient out of the ICU," he added.

He added that the ICU block of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health was being upgraded at a cost of Rs.10 crore.