

Despite available local treatment, outbound medical tourism continues to grow

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Dhaka : There is a growing trend among middle-income households in Bangladesh to seek healthcare services abroad, despite the availability of many treatments locally.

Ashraf Ahmed, President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said this during a seminar titled "Reversing the Outbound Healthcare Tourism" organised by DCCI at its auditorium on November 23.

"While many of the treatments are available locally, the demand for medical tourism keeps growing unabated," he claimed.

Citing data from World Trade Organisation (WTO), Ashraf Ahmed informed, 49 per cent of Bangladeshis lack access to quality healthcare, which has fuelled a rising tendency to seek treatment overseas.

He said that the trend is not driven by cost considerations, as travel and

living expenses often make foreign treatments marginally more expensive.

"Instead, it stems from issues such as a lack of international standards in local healthcare and insufficient customer satisfaction," he mentioned.

He further claimed, "Except for a few treatments like robotic surgery, the key drivers of this trend are the relatively lower confidence in and satisfaction with local services."

Ashraf Ahmed said that reversing the trend requires not only improved medical services but also a holistic approach to enhance the overall patient experience.

The seminar was addressed by prominent speakers like National Professor Dr A K Azad Khan, President of Bangladesh Diabetic Samity; Dr Md Liaquat Hossain, Acting Registrar of the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council; Dr Syed Abdul Hamid, Professor and Former Director at the Institute of Health Economics, Dhaka University; Dr Rezaul Karim Kazal, Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at BSMMU; Dr Abul Bashir Md Jamal, Professor of Surgery at Dhaka Medical College Hospital; and Dr Mir Saaduddin Ahmad, Secretary General of the Bangladesh Society of Emergency Medicine.