

A Comprehensive Resource for Patients Undergoing Elective Surgeries in Lmics: Addressing Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract:

Elective surgeries are increasingly common in developing nations, yet patients often face challenges related to access, information, and post-operative care. This manuscript proposes a one-stop resource model aimed at addressing these challenges. By examining the role of health insurance, innovative healthcare models like Pristyn Care's asset-light approach, and the integration of comprehensive services, we highlight strategies for improving patient experiences and outcomes in the context of elective surgeries. The findings demonstrate that integrating a one-stop resource model for elective surgeries can significantly improve accessibility, streamline the patient journey, and enhance post-operative outcomes. This model combines digital health platforms, flexible insurance schemes, and asset-light operational frameworks to optimize resource allocation and reduce barriers to care. By leveraging these strategies, healthcare providers can create a scalable and patient-centric system, particularly beneficial in low- and middle-income countries where fragmented services and limited resources often hinder effective care delivery. The research underscores the potential of such a model to transform patient experiences and establish a replicable framework for other regions facing similar challenges.

Keywords:

One-Stop Resource, LMICs, Low, Elective Surgeries, Patient-Centered Challenges, Patient Care.

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Introduction

The demand for elective surgeries is rising globally, particularly in developing nations, driven by several key factors. In low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), elective surgeries—planned, non-emergency procedures such as cataract removals, hernia repairs, and joint replacements—are essential for improving health outcomes and quality of life. Factors contributing to this growth include increased access to healthcare services, rising awareness of the benefits of surgical interventions, and advancements in medical technology, which make these procedures more accessible and effective (Precedence Research. 2024).

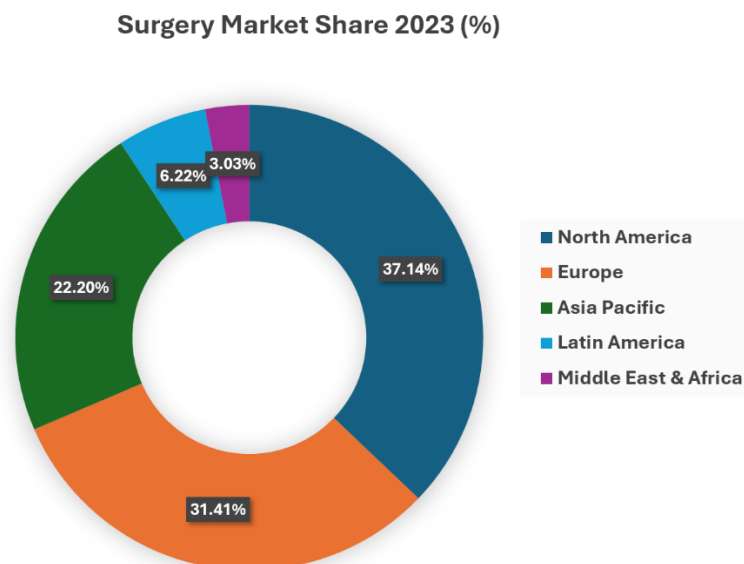


Figure 1: Region Wise Surgical Procedures Market Share in 2023 (Source: Precedence Research. 2024)

This growing demand for elective surgeries is a significant contributor to the expansion of the global surgical procedures market, which was valued at USD 3.17 trillion in 2023. The market is projected to reach USD 3.35 trillion in 2024 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.7%, reaching around USD 5.52 trillion by 2033. The increasing need for elective surgeries, alongside the rise of minimally invasive techniques, continues to fuel this market growth across both developed and developing regions (Precedence Research. 2024).

Rapid advancements in medical technology and surgical techniques have made elective surgeries safer and more efficient (Ansah et al. 2023). In 2014, >21 million surgeries were performed in the United States and estimates suggested that 91% of US surgeries were elective (Fu et al., 2020). Additionally, the Lancet Commission on Global Surgery estimates that 11% to 20% of surgical procedures performed in LMICs are elective, reflecting the growing accessibility of these services (Alkire et al. 2015).

Despite recent advancements, patients in LMICs face substantial hurdles in accessing elective surgeries. Many rural and underserved regions are devoid of the necessary healthcare infrastructure to perform these procedures. Significant challenges include the difficulty of reaching surgical facilities due to long distances, inadequate road conditions, and limited transportation options; a lack of local resources and expertise; financial burdens related to surgical care; and anxiety surrounding surgery and anesthesia (Grimes et al. 2011).

Given these multifaceted challenges, there is an urgent need for comprehensive solutions that address barriers to access and improve patient outcomes. One potential approach is the development of a one-stop resource model designed to support patients undergoing elective surgeries in developing nations. This model would integrate essential services—such as reliable information access, telemedicine consultations, transportation assistance, financial support, and post-operative care—into a single platform. By streamlining these services, the model aims to enhance the overall patient experience and facilitate better health outcomes for those seeking elective surgical interventions.

Challenges Faced by Patients

Patients in developing nations undergoing elective surgeries face a range of challenges that can severely impact their overall experience and outcomes. These challenges are multifaceted, spanning information gaps, logistical barriers, financial constraints, inadequate health insurance knowledge and inadequate post-operative care, all of which can deter patients from seeking necessary procedures or delay their recovery.

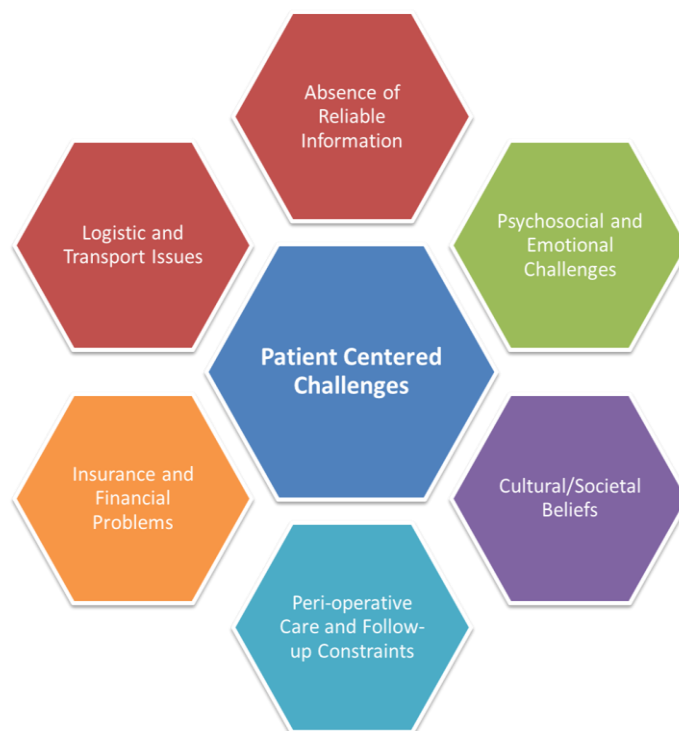


Figure 2: Challenges faced by patients while undergoing elective surgery

Understanding these challenges is crucial for designing effective interventions to improve access and quality of care in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

1. Lack of Information

One of the most significant barriers for patients in developing nations is the lack of reliable information about elective surgeries. Many patients are unaware of the available surgical options or have limited knowledge about the procedures, risks, benefits, and recovery processes. This information gap is often exacerbated by:

- **Limited Access to Healthcare Professionals:** In many rural or underserved areas, healthcare professionals are scarce, leaving patients without proper guidance on surgical procedures (Moore et al. 2024) (Maclaren et al. 2024).
- **Language and Literacy Barriers:** Educational materials about surgeries are often not available in local languages or in formats that are accessible to individuals with low health literacy. Complex medical jargon can confuse patients, making it difficult for them to make informed decisions (Al-Worafi. 2024).
- **Misinformation:** In some regions, cultural beliefs (Hasanuddin et al. 2023) and misconceptions about surgery (Ranganathan et al. 2024) are common, leading to fear and reluctance to pursue necessary procedures. Misinformation about surgical risks or

alternative treatments often causes patients to delay or avoid treatment, which can worsen their conditions over time and complicate recovery. A lack of adequate information also increases anxiety and stress, further hindering the decision-making process. For instance, superstitious beliefs, such as heightened concern over surgeries scheduled on Friday the 13th, can elevate patients' reluctance (Ranganathan et al. 2024).

2. Logistical Challenges

Transportation and logistical barriers are a major issue in accessing elective surgeries in LMICs, particularly for those living in rural or remote areas. These challenges include:

- **Distance from Healthcare Facilities:** Many rural patients must travel long distances to reach hospitals or surgical centers. In countries with poorly developed road infrastructure or limited public transportation systems, this journey can be time-consuming, expensive, and physically taxing (Mseke et al. 2024).
- **Unreliable Public Transportation:** Even in urban areas, public transportation may be inconsistent, overcrowded, or unaffordable, making it difficult for patients to reach medical facilities on the day of surgery or for follow-up appointments (Cochran et al. 2022).
- **Time Away from Work and Family:** Elective surgeries often require patients to take time off from work for both the procedure and recovery. For many low-income individuals, missing work translates directly into lost wages, which can discourage them from undergoing necessary procedures. Additionally, the need for caregiving responsibilities at home, particularly for women, can delay or prevent patients from seeking elective surgeries (Appavu et al. 2016).
- **Difficulty in Coordinating Care:** In some cases, patients must travel to multiple facilities for pre-operative tests (Pritchard. 2012), consultations, and post-operative care (Akhtar et al. 2013). This fragmented approach increases the logistical burden on patients, leading to missed appointments or delayed follow-ups, which can negatively affect surgical outcomes.

3. Financial Constraints

Cost is a substantial barrier for patients considering elective surgeries in developing nations. Even when the surgeries are medically necessary, many individuals cannot afford the costs associated with the procedure, pre-operative tests, medications, and post-operative care. Key financial challenges include:

- **High Out-of-Pocket Expenses:** In many LMICs, public healthcare systems do not cover elective surgeries, or they offer limited coverage, leading to high out-of-pocket

costs for patients. For those without health insurance, these expenses can be overwhelming, often forcing them to borrow money, sell assets, or delay treatment (Durand et al. 2022).

- **Lack of Insurance Coverage:** Health insurance is not widely available or affordable in many developing countries. Even when available, insurance often excludes elective surgeries or requires high co-payments, leaving patients without adequate financial protection (Billig et al. 2020). This can result in patients avoiding necessary surgery due to the fear of incurring debilitating debt.
- **Hidden Costs:** Beyond the surgery itself, there are several associated costs, such as transportation, accommodations for patients traveling from rural areas, lost wages from time off work, and post-operative care expenses. Many patients underestimate these costs and may face financial strain during recovery, which can deter them from undergoing elective surgeries altogether (Billig et al. 2020).

4. Post-operative Care and Follow-Up

Inadequate post-operative care is a common issue in developing countries, and this neglect can lead to complications, infections, or prolonged recovery times. Several factors contribute to insufficient follow-up care:

- **Limited Access to Post-Operative Support:** After surgery, many patients in LMICs do not receive proper follow-up care. The lack of rehabilitation facilities or specialized care in rural areas can result in patients missing essential follow-up appointments or not receiving the physical therapy required for optimal recovery (Patel et al. 2022).
- **Poor Communication Between Patients and Providers:** After discharge, patients may not have clear instructions on how to care for themselves during recovery, leading to complications such as infections or delayed wound healing (DeSai et al. 2021). In some cases, patients may not have access to healthcare providers for consultations or questions, particularly in regions with limited telemedicine services (Brajcich et al. 2021).
- **Financial Constraints for Post-Operative Care:** Many patients underestimate the cost of post-operative care, including medications, caregivers, wound dressings, and rehabilitation (Manohar et al. 2014). This can lead to non-compliance with follow-up care recommendations or premature discontinuation of medications, increasing the risk of complications and readmissions.

5. Psychosocial and Emotional Challenges

The psychological and emotional toll of undergoing elective surgery is often overlooked, especially in settings where mental health support is limited. Patients may face:

- **Fear and Anxiety:** Uncertainty about surgical outcomes, fear of complications, or concerns about the financial implications of surgery can cause significant anxiety, which may lead to decision paralysis or emotional distress before and after surgery (Lakhe et al. 2022).
- **Social Stigma:** In some cultures, undergoing surgery, particularly for elective procedures, may carry social stigma or be seen as a sign of weakness. This can discourage patients from seeking surgery or sharing their medical experiences with others, further isolating them during the recovery process (Garcia et al. 2024).
- **Lack of Emotional Support:** In LMICs, where healthcare systems are often overstretched, patients may not receive the emotional support they need during their surgical journey. The absence of patient support groups or counseling services can leave patients feeling isolated and vulnerable during recovery (Shah & Pathak. 2024).

Proposed One-Stop Resource Model

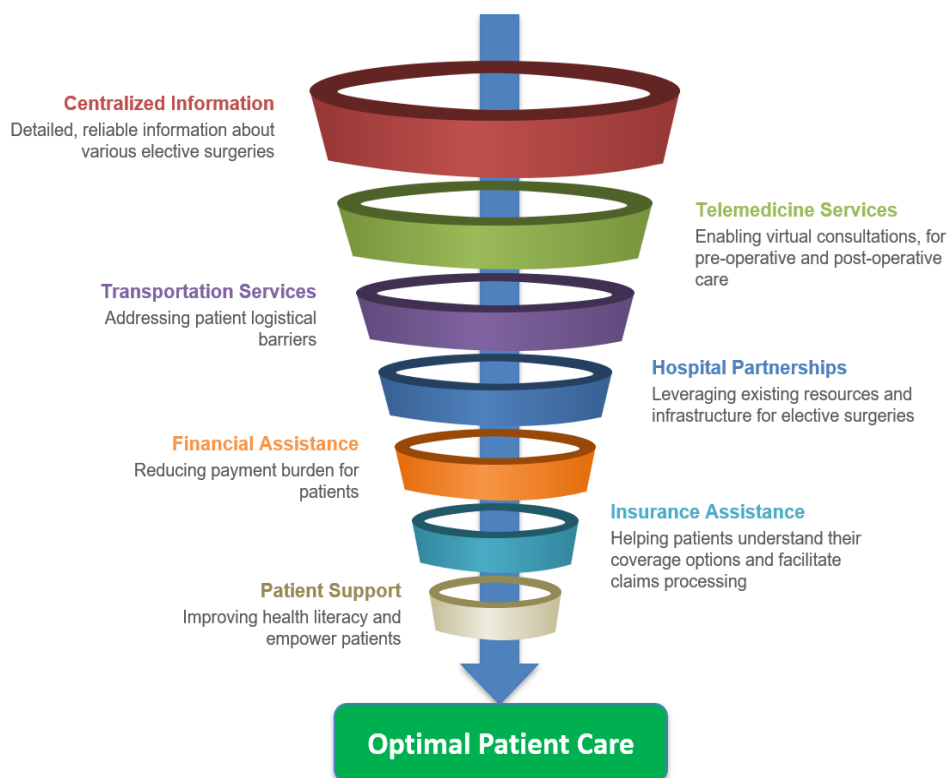


Figure 3: Prime components of one-stop resource model for optimal patient care

The proposed one-stop resource model aims to address the complex challenges patients face when undergoing elective surgeries in developing nations. By integrating a range of essential services into a

single platform, this model enhances patient access to care, improves outcomes, and simplifies the surgical process. Below is a detailed breakdown of the key components of this model:

1. Centralized Information Hub

The information hub serves as the cornerstone of the one-stop resource model. It is a comprehensive but concise digital platform designed to provide patients with detailed, reliable information about various elective surgeries, including:

- **Procedure Overviews:** A description of the surgery, its purpose, and how it is performed.
- **Risks and Benefits:** A transparent presentation of the potential risks and expected benefits, helping patients make informed decisions.
- **Pre-Operative Guidelines:** Information on how to prepare for surgery, including dietary restrictions, medication adjustments, and physical preparations.
- **Recovery Processes:** Detailed guides on what to expect post-surgery, recovery timelines, and rehabilitation exercises.
- **Multimedia Learning:** The inclusion of videos, infographics, and interactive tutorials to make medical information more accessible to patients with low health literacy or language barriers.

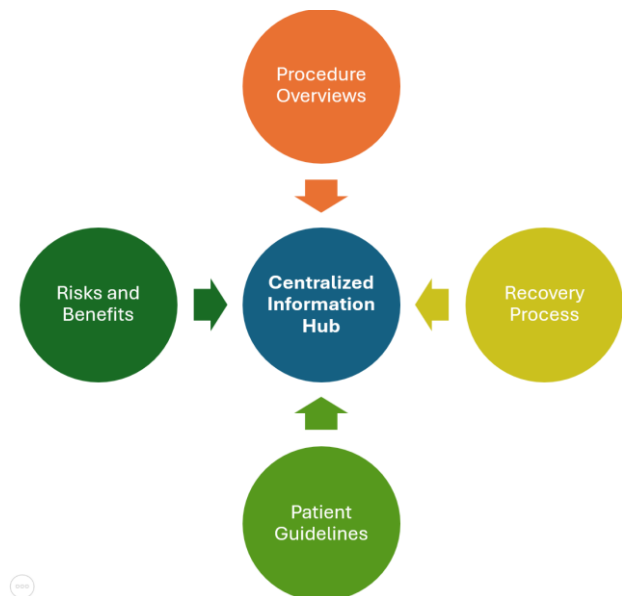


Figure 4: Centralization of digitized information for easy access

This hub not only enhances patient knowledge but also reduces anxiety by demystifying the surgical process.

2. Telemedicine Services

A robust telemedicine feature enables virtual consultations, which play a critical role in pre-operative and post-operative care. Through telemedicine, patients can:

- Access pre-operative assessments without the need for travel, ensuring timely evaluation by healthcare professionals.
- Receive post-operative follow-ups from home, reducing the logistical burden of in-person visits and minimizing the risk of post-surgical infections.

- Obtain prescriptions and medical advice instantly, which can prevent delays in post-operative care and ensure adherence to treatment plans.

Telemedicine reduces costs associated with travel and time off work, while also bridging the gap between rural patients and specialized urban healthcare providers.

3. Transportation Services

To address logistical barriers, the platform integrates transportation support by partnering with local transport services. The transportation component includes:

- **Shuttle Services:** Scheduled shuttles specifically for patients undergoing surgeries, ensuring they arrive on time for procedures and follow-ups.
- **Ride-Sharing Partnerships:** Collaborations with local or national ride-sharing platforms like Uber or Ola to provide affordable, reliable transport tailored to the needs of surgical patients.
- **Emergency Travel Assistance:** In urgent cases, the service offers support for expedited transportation.

These services ensure that patients, especially those from remote or underserved areas, can reach healthcare facilities without unnecessary delays or financial burden.

4. Hospital Partnerships

Establishing strategic partnerships with hospitals is crucial for the effective implementation of the one-stop resource model. This collaboration involves:

- **Utilization of Existing Infrastructure:** Partnering with established hospitals allows this model to utilize existing resources, including operating rooms and recovery facilities, to offer elective surgeries without requiring substantial capital investment in new infrastructure. This approach not only minimizes costs but also generates revenue for the partner hospitals, creating a mutually beneficial relationship.
- **Standardized Care Protocols:** Partner hospitals can work together to create standardized protocols for elective surgeries, ensuring consistent quality of care across different facilities. This can lead to improved patient safety and satisfaction.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Collaborative training programs can be established to enhance the skills of healthcare providers in partner hospitals. This can improve surgical techniques, post-operative care, and patient management practices.
- **Referral Networks:** By building a referral network among partner hospitals, patients can be directed to appropriate facilities based on their specific needs, ensuring they receive the best possible care. This can also include access to specialized services that may not be available in all locations.

- **Shared Resources:** Partnering hospitals can share resources, such as surgical instruments and medical supplies, to reduce costs and improve efficiency in service delivery.
- **Data Sharing and Analytics:** Collaborative data sharing can facilitate research and analysis on patient outcomes, helping to identify areas for improvement and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the model.

5. Financial Assistance Programs

Financial constraints are a significant barrier to accessing elective surgeries. The proposed model aims to alleviate these burdens through multiple strategies:

- **Partnerships with NGOs and Government Programs:** Collaborations with non-profit organizations and government bodies to provide financial aid or subsidized healthcare services for low-income patients.
- **Micro-Insurance Products:** Customized micro-insurance plans designed specifically for elective surgeries, offering coverage at an affordable premium for low-income families.
- **Surgical Funds:** Establishment of a specific fund that patients can apply to for financial assistance in covering surgery-related expenses such as pre-operative tests, the procedure itself, and post-operative care.
- **Medical Loans:** Tie-ups with financial institutions to offer zero-interest loans or affordable financing options for surgeries, allowing patients to pay in installments without a financial burden.

6. Insurance Assistance

Navigating health insurance can be complex for patients seeking elective surgeries. The model includes an insurance assistance component designed to help patients understand their coverage options and facilitate claims processing. Key features include:

- **Insurance Navigation Support:** Dedicated staff available to assist patients in understanding their insurance policies, including benefits related to elective surgeries. This support helps clarify coverage details and out-of-pocket costs associated with procedures.
- **Claims Assistance Services:** Guidance on how to file claims effectively with insurance providers. This includes helping patients gather necessary documentation and understanding timelines for claims processing.
- **Pre-Certification Help:** Assistance in obtaining pre-certification from insurance companies when required before undergoing surgery. This ensures that all necessary approvals are secured ahead of time to avoid delays or denials of coverage.

7. Community Support Groups

The model incorporates peer-support networks, both online and offline, to offer patients emotional support and practical advice from others who have undergone similar procedures.

Key features include:

- **Online Discussion Forums:** Moderated platforms where patients can ask questions, share their experiences, and receive peer-to-peer support.
- **In-Person Support Networks:** Local support groups where patients can meet regularly to discuss their recovery process, share health tips, and receive encouragement.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Pairing post-operative patients with those preparing for surgery to provide one-on-one guidance and emotional support.

These support systems have been shown to significantly improve recovery outcomes, reduce post-surgical anxiety, and build a sense of community.

8. Patient Education Workshops

To improve health literacy and empower patients, the model organizes regular patient education workshops, which include:

- **Interactive Sessions:** In-person or virtual workshops conducted by medical professionals to educate patients about various elective surgeries, post-operative care, and overall health maintenance.
- **Customized Learning Materials:** Workshop materials tailored to different cultural and educational backgrounds to ensure information is accessible to all.
- **Focus on Preventive Care:** Emphasis on lifestyle changes and preventive health practices that can minimize the need for future surgeries and improve long-term well-being.

Case Study: Pristyn Care's Asset-Light Model in Indian Healthcare

Pristyn Care stands out as an innovative example of how to tackle the systemic challenges associated with elective surgeries in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Founded in 2018, this Indian healthcare startup employs an asset-light model, which means it does not own its own hospitals or medical facilities. Instead, Pristyn Care partners with existing hospitals and clinics to provide high-quality, minimally invasive surgeries. This strategic approach leverages digital healthcare solutions and collaborative partnerships, allowing for cost-effective and scalable surgical services.

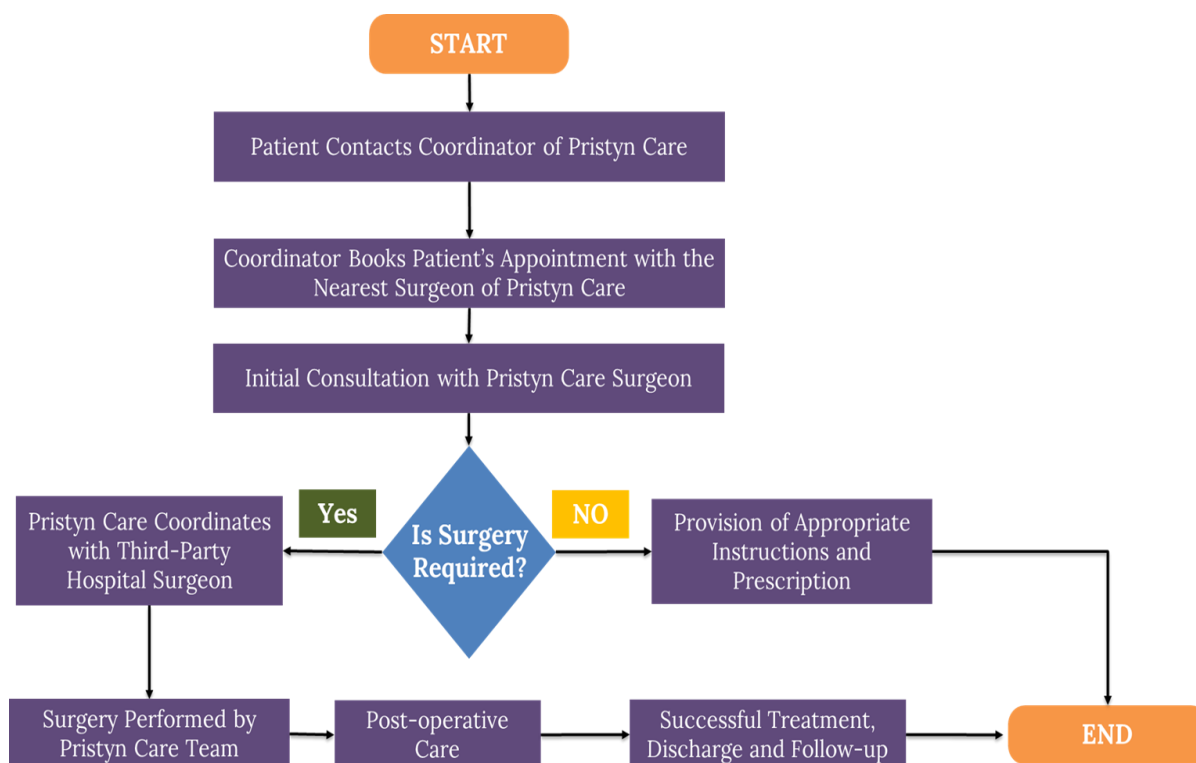


Figure 5: Flowchart displaying overview of Pristyn Care asset-light business model

Key Features of Pristyn Care's Asset-Light Model

1. Hospital Partnerships

Pristyn Care has forged collaborations with over 800 hospitals across more than 40 cities in India. This network allows the company to utilize hospital infrastructure without the financial burden of constructing and maintaining its own facilities. Key benefits of this approach include:

- **Rapid Expansion:** The asset-light model facilitates swift scaling of services across diverse geographic areas, including urban, peri-urban, and rural regions, without the significant capital constraints that come with building new hospitals. This enables Pristyn Care to reach a broader patient base and meet the growing demand for elective surgeries (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).
- **Cost Efficiency:** By renting operating theaters and utilizing existing hospital resources, Pristyn Care significantly reduces overhead costs. These savings are passed on to patients in the form of lower fees, making elective surgeries more financially accessible to a larger segment of the population (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).

2. Digital Platform

Emphasizing a digital-first approach, Pristyn Care streamlines the patient journey through its all-inclusive platform. Patients can easily:

- **Book Consultations and Surgeries:** The user-friendly interface enables patients to schedule appointments, reserve surgery dates, and receive reminders for follow-up care, minimizing the administrative burden on patients (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).
- **Access Telemedicine Services:** Patients from remote areas can benefit from virtual consultations with specialists, ensuring they receive expert pre-operative advice and support without the need for long-distance travel (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).
- **Receive Personalized Care Plans:** Pristyn Care provides customized care plans tailored to each patient's specific needs, ensuring that they are well-informed about what to expect at each stage of the surgical process, from pre-operative assessments to post-operative recovery (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).

3. End-to-End Service Delivery

Pristyn Care excels in offering a seamless, end-to-end service model, which encompasses every stage of the surgical journey:

- **Transportation Arrangements:** The company addresses logistical challenges by coordinating reliable transportation for patients to and from the hospital, effectively removing a significant barrier to accessing surgical care (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).
- **Insurance Assistance:** Pristyn Care helps patients navigate the often-complex insurance claims process, ensuring they maximize their coverage for surgeries. This support alleviates some of the financial burdens that patients face (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).
- **Post-Operative Care:** To address the common issue of inadequate follow-up care, Pristyn Care offers home visits by dedicated teams for post-surgery support. This includes wound dressing, recovery monitoring, and general health checks, which significantly enhance recovery outcomes and minimize the risk of complications (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).

4. Addressing Challenges in LMICs

Pristyn Care's asset-light model effectively addresses several critical challenges in LMICs:

- **Infrastructure Limitations:** By leveraging existing hospital infrastructure, Pristyn Care sidesteps the need for extensive capital investment, making high-quality surgical care

- accessible to underserved populations, particularly in rural and remote areas where healthcare facilities may be lacking (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).
- **Logistical Support:** The integration of transportation services helps remove a common barrier to accessing elective surgeries. For patients residing far from urban centers, this logistical support is vital for ensuring timely access to care (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).
 - **Financial Accessibility:** The company actively provides insurance support and financing options to its patients, substantially reducing the cost barriers associated with elective surgeries. The efficiency of the asset-light model enables lower surgical fees, making these services more affordable for individuals and families in need (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).
 - **Post-Operative Care:** Recognizing the frequent inadequacy of follow-up care in many healthcare systems, Pristyn Care's model includes comprehensive post-operative support. This proactive approach to recovery ensures that patients receive necessary care and guidance, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes and reduced rates of complications (Bagga et al. 2024) (Pristyn Care. 2024).

Discussion

The establishment of a one-stop resource model for patients undergoing elective surgeries in LMICs addresses the systemic challenges associated with healthcare accessibility and quality. By integrating various components such as education (Brodersen et al., 2023), telemedicine (Robin et al., 2023), transportation services (Heaton & Kohn, 2024), and financial assistance (Randall et al., 2024) into a centralized platform, the model empowers patients to navigate their surgical journey more effectively. This integrated approach not only enhances the patient's experience but also improves continuity of care by ensuring that individuals have access to necessary resources before, during, and after their surgeries. By facilitating informed decision-making through health literacy initiatives, patients can better understand their surgical options and engage actively in their healthcare, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes (Muscat et al., 2021).

The significance of this proposed model extends beyond individual patient care; it has the potential to transform the healthcare landscape in LMICs. By improving access to elective surgeries and reducing financial barriers, the model can lead to increased demand for surgical services, prompting insurers and governments to expand coverage options and enhance overall quality of care. This shift could catalyze broader healthcare reforms, fostering a more equitable system that benefits not only those seeking elective surgeries but also the wider population. Additionally, the scalability of the model allows it to be

adapted to diverse healthcare contexts, making it a valuable framework for addressing the varying needs of patients in both urban and rural settings.

The future of this model presents a transformative opportunity for healthcare delivery in LMICs. By focusing on patient care, training healthcare providers, and appropriate usage of healthcare technology, LMICs can effectively implement this model on a large scale. Policy support will be crucial in promoting innovation and ensuring quality standards across participating facilities. Additionally, robust data collection will enable ongoing evaluation and refinement of the model to meet evolving patient needs.

Conclusion

The establishment of a centralized resource model is essential for supporting patients undergoing elective surgeries in developing nations. By addressing multifaceted challenges through an integrated approach that includes education, telemedicine services, transportation assistance, financial support programs, community engagement initiatives, and robust health insurance options, healthcare systems can work toward improving accessibility and quality for all patients in need of elective surgery. The success of Pristyn Care's asset-light model serves as a case study on how such a platform can be operationalized on a scale, offering key lessons for developing countries. Suggestions for further research include:

- Conducting longitudinal studies to evaluate the impact of centralized resource models on patient outcomes, including recovery times, patient satisfaction, and complication rates in diverse socioeconomic settings.
- Examining the economic feasibility of implementing asset-light models in resource-constrained environments, comparing them with traditional healthcare delivery systems.
- Investigating the role of emerging technologies such as AI-driven diagnostic tools, wearable health monitors, and telemedicine in enhancing the efficiency and scalability of the proposed model.
- Exploring how cultural, regional, and local healthcare dynamics influence the adoption and success of centralized resource models, particularly in rural or underserved areas.
- Analyzing the role of government policies, public-private partnerships, and international funding in supporting and sustaining such integrated healthcare models across low- and middle-income countries.

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