

Ganga Hospital to launch air ambulance service

Twin-engine helicopter will provide emergency medical services in region

STAFF REPORTER
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Coimbatore-based Ganga Hospital is all set to launch country's first air ambulance service run by a hospital. The service, Ganga Air Ambulance (GAA), will be officially launched by Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa, Chief of Air Staff, Indian Air Force, on Sunday.

The 1992-made Agusta Westland 109C model twin-engine helicopter will provide emergency medical services in the region apart from handling emergency airlifting for Ganga Hospital.

GAA, that can carry maximum of two patients at a time, is equipped with emergency support systems such as stretcher, suction unit defibrillator, oxygen provision, pulse and pressure monitoring equipment.

According to directors of the hospital S. Raja Sabapathy and S. Rajasekaran, GAA will be the first air ambulance to be operated by a hospital in the country with its own helipad. GAA will be based at the helipad located within the campus of Ganga Nursing College at Vattamalaipalayam, near Thudiyalur,



J.G. Shanmuganathan (second left), chairman and managing director of Ganga Hospital, and directors S. Rajasekaran (left), S. Raja Sabapathy (third left) along with crew of Ganga Air Ambulance ahead of its launch in Coimbatore on Friday. ■ S. SIVA SARAVANAN

which is the only private helipad approved by Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

"The service will be open to any medical facility in the southern States for emergency medical service. The service can be used for hand-

ling trauma cases, apart from cardiac, neurological, paediatric emergency cases and quick transportation of harvested organs. It can airlift patients from temporary helipads in each district," said Dr. Raja Sabapathy.

Four paramedical personnel have been specially trained for GAA to meet re-

quirements of DGCA. During emergency airlifting, the patient will be accompanied by a doctor, a paramedic, and an attender.

"While it takes at least more than two hours to bring a patient from Ooty to Coimbatore by road, the same distance can be covered by an air ambulance

in 10 minutes," said Dr. Rajasekaran.

GAA will be operated in association with Delhi-based OSS Air Management. Dr. Rajasekaran said that the hospital has currently entered into a lease with OSS for two years. The hospital will pay ₹ 23 lakh to OSS a month for which the latter will offer the chopper, two pilots and three-member technical staff. Though the cost of service is depended on the distance and time travelled, ₹ one lakh will be charged for one hour which is also the minimum charge even if the travel time is less than an hour. Lead pilot S. K. Battacharya, who retired from Air Force has an experience of over 10,000 flying hours. Second pilot Naveen Kumar C., a former employee of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, has an experience of 2,800 flying hours. The pilots are licensed to fly after sunset with operations from airport to airport.

GAA can fly 230 nautical miles two way or 425 km one way before the next refuelling. GAA emergency service can be reached round-the-clock at 1800 425 25555 or 90030-10200.