

## Interview: Dr Hasan Kus, Healthcare Business Development President, Anadolu Group

A third of all sales at Anadolu Medical Center (AMC), a JCI accredited hospital in Istanbul with 209 beds which is affiliated to John Hopkins in the USA, now comes from healthcare tourism. Last year foreign patients rose to 5,400. The main hospital is not-for-profit and part of the Anadolu Foundation, owned by Anadolu Group, one of the largest conglomerates in the country, but plans are afoot to put the healthcare tourism arm into a for-profit operation.

Anadolu has just constructed a 82 bed on campus hotel to take outpatients and their families and is planning to add outpatient facilities in Romania and other client countries. The campus will also soon boast a University facility for teaching doctors, run by Anadolu Foundation.

**HCE:** So tell me about the hospital?

**HK:** It's top of the range. We've got 50,000 square metres built seven years ago on a huge campus of 200,000 square metres. The hospital includes a special bone marrow transplant unit with 22 beds and we get 12% of our sales from the state for cardiac and bone marrow operations.

We've also got Cyber Knife, two new True Beam linear accelerators, PET-CT and a dedicated private chemotherapy unit.

We've changed a lot in the last five years. As the most critical one, hospital's financial dependency on the foundation funds is solved. Acting as CEO of the hospital for about five years, I've been appointed as healthcare business development president of the parent company six months ago.

**HCE:** So how has healthcare tourism grown?

**HK:** We recognised the potential in 2008 and we've been almost doubling numbers year on year. Patient numbers in 2011 jumped from 3,400 to 5,400, for instance.

**HCE:** So where are they coming from?

**HK:** Mainly from Romania, Bulgaria, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kosovo and Russia. We've got 45 people working full time for foreign patients, including doctors, nurses and translators. We recognise that people want to meet our representatives first in their home land. They want

eye to eye, face to face contact. But we are also investing in advertising - we had a big campaign in Bucharest airport, for instance.

**HCE:** I heard that Russians and Ukrainians have problems with the idea of going to Turkey for medical care.

**HK:** There is something in that. Many Russians do not like to think that a country like Turkey could offer more advanced medical treatment. Their image of Turkey is sea, sand and sun. When you talk to Russian doctors about what we offer, they won't really believe you until they visit and see for themselves.

But you can't talk about Russia as a country. It is a series of regional markets and in some of those, typically, where there is an indigenous population with links to Turkey, we do well - places like Ufa and Kazan, for instance.

**HCE:** So let's pretend I am a Romanian who has been diagnosed with stomach cancer. How will I contact you?

**HK:** In-country through our local office and normally you'll want a second opinion. And you'll want it fast. We are good at doing this in 2-3 days time, including pathology and radiology.

**HCE:** OK so let's say you find that there is almost nothing you can do for me - it's terminal. What do you tell me?

**HK:** Well, we obviously tell patients the truth. We are very upfront about likely outcomes.

If you need palliative care we can also provide that in Anadolu Medical Center

**HCE:** So whatever I have I will need to know how much it is going to cost. I will want reassurances that the cost is fixed.

**HK:** Yes and we provide that for most procedures. We used to get half a dozen patients from the UK every month to use Cyber Knife before it was available in Britain and we could always give them an accurate price. It is harder for cancer, so here we itemise the cost of different procedures so the patient has a real menu.

**HCE:** How much can you do in-country?

**HK:** Much more than we are doing at the moment. Often patients have no faith in local medicine so cancer patients will want to come to Istanbul for something as routine as washing out their central catheter.

It makes sense for us to offer more of these services in country in outpatient settings.

**HCE:** Tell me about the link to John Hopkins? How important is it.

**HK:** It is very useful indeed. It is really consultancy. They send a team of clinicians once a year to check us out and we also are able to hire people from them. Our CNO and CEO are both from John Hopkins. We are very happy indeed with our affiliation with John Hopkins.

**HCE:** And the Turkish government is very much behind healthcare tourism?

**HK:** Yes it is planning a law which will see 50% of air travel costs borne by the Turkish state. Last year the government says that round 120,0000 patients worth \$800m came to Turkey for treatment, but I am sceptical of that figure.

**HCE:** Why?

**HK:** I think well over 60% are ex-pats, mainly from Germany. Why else would so many Germans and Dutch be traveling to central Anatolia for healthcare? I think the same is also true for India. There are many ex-pat Indians travelling back to their own country for healthcare but counted as tourists.

**HCE:** And you see a big opportunity in Iraq?

**HK:** Absolutely. I spent three day traveling 2,000 kms there recently. There are huge needs. Around

70pc of the healthcare professionals have left Iraq for the west and, because of sanctions, many of those who have stayed have not been able to follow Western medicine for the last 30 years. We are working at district and government level.

**HCE:** And you've visited Jordan as well?

**HK:** Yes it is a real centre for medical tourism. I went round the King Hussein Cancer Centre and other private hospitals in Amman and to a university hospital 8ms away from the Syrian border.

Facilities are not state of the art but many of the physicians are trained in the UK and the USA. Jordan is well placed for Syria and Saudi Arabia.

**HCE:** Hmm sounds like you do a lot of travelling.

**HK:** I've met 10 Ministers of health and 4 vice ministers so far.

**HCE:** So who do you see as your main competitors?

**HK:** Israel, Germany, Austria. You find Germans everywhere and all selling hard! The British less so - in fact the UK has lost out badly over the last decade. I don't think British hospitals are serious contenders.



Dr Hasan Kus, Anadolu Group

## HCE reports



In addition to its monthly newsletter, HCE produces comprehensive market reports focusing on specialist service delivery across Europe.

The latest of these, *Opportunities in Healthcare: Diagnostics - Imaging and Laboratories*, is a 230 page report featuring comprehensive coverage of 14 national markets is available from HCE priced at €2,500 for paper copy and €3,000 for a PDF site licence for multiple users.

To find out more visit [www.healthcareeuropa.com](http://www.healthcareeuropa.com)