

Eastern electives

Working with UK Trade & Investment in Hyderabad, UK company Medco Global Exchange has made the connections it needed to set up its first Indian elective program for UK medical students



Fast facts

Company:	Medco Global Exchange
Industry:	Healthcare
Target Market:	India
UKTI Services:	Overseas Market Introduction Service
www.med-co.com/globalexchange	

An overseas elective used to be an opportunity for final year medical students to give of their time and training to under-staffed and under-funded healthcare facilities, in developing countries. In an interesting twist, Swansea-based Medco Global Exchange sends British undergraduate medics to state-of-the-art hospitals and healthcare institutions in emerging markets.

The company is an offshoot of clinical services provider Med-Co Group. Med-Co (Europe) Ltd was established in 1998, providing temporary staffing solutions to GP surgeries across the UK. The company has since diversified to run specialist GP-led medical services for the Navy and the National Health Service (NHS), and this has motivated it to set up a number of new companies and to look into overseas opportunities.

“Our parent company found its niche in medical recruitment and continues

to fill locum positions throughout the UK,” says Ian Rees, Chairman at Med-Co Group. “There are a lot of players in the UK’s healthcare sector, and we wanted to use the collective expertise of our staff to differentiate and expand our operations. Although we will continue our work in clinical recruitment and service delivery in the UK, we felt that there were international opportunities to be explored.”

Two-way street

In 2010, International Business Wales introduced Med-Co to the UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) representative for Hyderabad in India. Unfamiliar with the city, the company asked about the state of healthcare there and was advised that Hyderabad was becoming one of the main healthcare centres in India. Its managers recalled how much they had learned from their overseas experiences and with this in mind, Med-Co decided to pursue a new track, facilitating

electives for UK medical students at world-class treatment facilities overseas. The company set up Medco Global Exchange to do just that.

“We had looked into developing partnerships with UK medical schools to access newly qualified doctors for local employment, without thinking of the international angle,” says Ian. “When UKTI opened our eyes to Hyderabad’s status as an up-and-coming leader in healthcare, we realised that leading international hospitals could provide an additional perspective to UK students. Traditionally, India has attracted foreign medical undergraduates and their peers to work in outlying and rural areas. But the development of globally competitive Indian medical centres has made it possible to offer a completely new elective experience. Thanks to initial dialogue with UKTI, we decided to establish Hyderabad as an early centre for Medco Global Exchange.”





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Market support

Medco Global Exchange began to devise fun, informative and stimulating packages, in a learning environment suited to the participants and elective requirements. The company wanted to partner with high-end private hospitals in Hyderabad and commissioned an Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) report from the local UKTI team to explore its options.

UKTI provided a thorough overview of the healthcare sector in Hyderabad, and put Medco Global Exchange in touch with several hospitals interested in accepting UK medical undergraduates. A first visit to Hyderabad in April 2011, helped the company to network and to better understand the practicalities of setting up its exchange programmes.

“UKTI helped us come up with the initial concept for our exchange programme and without the Hyderabad team we wouldn't have made it to India so soon,” says Ian. “The OMIS was highly informative and really helped us put our plans into action. The UKTI team attended all of our major meetings, lending instant credibility and introducing us to many of our current Indian partners.”

The UK and India

India is the UK's second largest export market in the developing world after China.

India's economy is one of the fastest-growing in the world, with a rapidly expanding consumer class. The UK has strong ties with India, and UK companies are well positioned to take advantage of this growing export and investment market.

Ready to go

Medco Global Exchange was pleased with its first visit, and approached UKTI for help to also find a web development company and serviced apartments for its elective student travellers. In February 2012, the company returned to Hyderabad and has since finalised arrangements for accommodation, set up a telephone advice and support line and, with assistance from a Hyderabad-based development company, launched a web site.

The first elective session will start in autumn 2012 under the guidance of a local tour manager to help settle and support participants. Students will be given pre-elective help with visas and healthcare, and on arrival will take part in a cultural induction course to prepare them for their stay. As well as working in city hospitals, students can also look forward to participating in outreach programmes in rural areas.

“Thanks to UKTI, we have secured memoranda of understanding from private hospitals in Hyderabad to host UK undergraduates, and we are also in talks with government-funded medical institutions,” says Ian. “We are now excited to see how the programme works out for our first participants, and will continue to develop packages across South East Asia.”

Liberalisation of the economy continues, with trade barriers largely removed, and the role of the private sector is gradually increasing, including in areas that have been dominated by the public sector in the past.

For further information about business opportunities in India, please go to www.ukti.gov.uk/india

Helping you access international markets

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Through a range of unique services, including participation at selected trade fairs, overseas missions and providing bespoke market intelligence, UK Trade & Investment can help you crack foreign markets and quickly get to grips with regulations and business practices overseas.

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A service package could include:

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- Analysis of market entry strategies
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- Identification of possible business partners



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