

BioSpect

the business of Bio

24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.com

•••The future of reproductive medicine will be shaped by the convergence of AI, genomics, precision medicine and advanced embryology•

01 September 2026 | Views | By Narayan Kulkarni

India's fertility care landscape is witnessing a shift as providers move beyond expanding capacity to building integrated, outcome-driven care models. Against this backdrop, Santaana Fertility, founded by Padma Shri awardee and reproductive medicine pioneer Dr. Kamini Rao, has partnered with Magnet Hospitals in a Rs 50-crore deal to expand its footprint to eight centres across Bengaluru. The partnership signals Santaana's next phase of growth, combining its clinical expertise with a hospital-linked ecosystem to improve patient access and continuity of care. In this interview, Dr. Kamini Rao explains why this was the right time to scale, what made Magnet Hospitals the partner of choice, and how the company plans to grow without compromising on its core philosophy of personalised, evidence-based fertility care.



Santaana Fertility has established a strong clinical reputation over the years. Why was there a need to scale now instead of continuing with measured, organic growth?

Clinical credibility takes years to build, and I believe Santaana has earned that trust through consistent outcomes and ethical practice. However, infertility is no longer a niche specialty. Lifestyle changes, delayed parenthood, rising awareness and improved access have significantly increased the demand for high-quality reproductive care.

The question before us was not whether to grow, but whether we could make our model accessible to many more couples without diluting what makes it successful. We felt that the time was right to transition from a single-centre model of excellence to a network that can deliver the same standards consistently across multiple locations. Scaling, therefore, is not an end in itself; it is a means to democratise quality fertility care.

What was the strategic trigger behind this partnership? Was it about capital, infrastructure, market opportunity, or something else?

The partnership was driven by strategic alignment rather than a single factor. Capital certainly enables growth, but sustainable healthcare businesses are built on shared values, clinical governance and long-term commitment.

Magnet Hospitals understands that healthcare cannot be managed purely through financial metrics. They recognise the importance of investing in people, systems, technology and clinical governance. We saw an opportunity to combine Santaana's expertise in reproductive medicine with Magnet's vision of building integrated centres of excellence. That alignment was the real catalyst.

Why did you choose Magnet Hospitals over other potential partners? What differentiated them from a strategic standpoint?

Our decision was based less on valuation and more on philosophy. We were looking for a partner that viewed fertility as a specialised continuum of care rather than simply another healthcare vertical.

Magnet Hospitals demonstrated a deep respect for clinician-led decision-making, patient-centric care and long-term institution building. They appreciated that trust, ethics and outcomes are intangible assets that must be protected during expansion. That shared philosophy gave us confidence that Santaana's identity would be strengthened rather than altered.

With an investment of Rs 50 crore, what are the key priorities—expanding capacity, investing in technology, attracting talent, or improving patient outcomes?

Healthcare investments should ultimately translate into better patient outcomes. The capital will therefore support four equally important priorities. First, expanding access through new centres across Bengaluru and surrounding regions. Second, investing in advanced laboratory infrastructure, digital systems and emerging reproductive technologies. Third, building a larger multidisciplinary clinical team while nurturing future specialists through structured education and mentoring. Finally, strengthening quality systems, research and outcome measurement so that every new centre delivers the same clinical standards as our flagship practice.

Many fertility chains focus on rapid expansion, but you've consistently emphasized clinical excellence. How do you ensure that scale doesn't compromise quality?

Quality is not maintained through individual excellence alone; it is maintained through systems. Every successful healthcare institution eventually evolves from being personality-driven to process-driven.

As we grow, every laboratory protocol, stimulation pathway, embryology process and quality indicator will be standardised and continuously audited. Clinical autonomy will always exist, but it will operate within evidence-based governance frameworks. We will measure success not by how quickly we open centres, but by how consistently we reproduce excellent outcomes across them.

You've said the industry has often measured success by the number of IVF cycles performed. Is the fertility sector due for a shift in how it defines growth and success?

Absolutely. Volume is an operational metric; it is not a measure of clinical excellence. The future of fertility care should be judged by healthy singleton births, managing the couple's journey in all its aspects, patient safety, ethical practice, transparency in reporting outcomes and patient experience.

As reproductive medicine matures, I believe the industry must move towards value-based care rather than procedure-based care. Success should reflect the quality of care delivered rather than simply the quantity of interventions performed.

How does the hospital-linked model with Magnet Hospitals create a competitive advantage over standalone fertility clinics?

Infertility rarely exists in isolation. Patients increasingly present with metabolic disorders, endocrine diseases, genetic concerns, immunological factors, male infertility, recurrent pregnancy loss and high-risk obstetric factors that require multidisciplinary management.

A hospital-linked ecosystem enables seamless access to physicians across specialties, advanced diagnostics, imaging, genetics, neonatal care and surgical expertise. This creates a more integrated patient journey, improves continuity of care and allows us to manage increasingly complex cases with greater confidence.

The fertility sector has seen significant investor interest in recent years. How do you see the market evolving over the next five years, and where does Santaana fit into that landscape?

India's fertility market is entering a phase of organised growth. We will likely see consolidation, greater adoption of technology, increasing insurance engagement over time and higher expectations regarding transparency and clinical outcomes.

Patients are becoming more informed and are seeking institutions they can trust rather than simply providers with the largest network. Santaana intends to occupy that position—as a clinically respected, academically active, research focused and ethically governed institution that combines personalised care with scalable systems.

The fertility care market is becoming increasingly crowded with corporate-backed players. How does Santaana plan to differentiate itself beyond clinical legacy?

Legacy creates trust, but it is not sufficient for future growth. Our differentiation will come from combining decades of clinical experience with innovation, research, advanced embryology, patient education and integrated care pathways. We also intend to invest significantly in clinician development because healthcare institutions ultimately become stronger through the quality of their people. In healthcare, reputation must be continuously earned. That will remain our philosophy.

Will this partnership change Santaana's business model in any way, particularly in terms of patient acquisition, referrals, or integrated care delivery?

The core philosophy of patient-centred fertility care will remain unchanged. However, patients will benefit from stronger integration across specialties, better digital engagement, improved continuity of care and access to a broader healthcare

ecosystem. The partnership also enables structured referral pathways where appropriate while ensuring that clinical decisions remain independent and focused entirely on patient welfare.

Do you see Bengaluru as a launchpad for a larger national expansion strategy, or will your focus remain on strengthening regional leadership first?

Every successful healthcare institution should first build depth before pursuing breadth. Our immediate priority is to establish a strong pan Bangalore network that consistently delivers high-quality outcomes. Once that foundation is firmly established, there will certainly be opportunities to expand into other geographies. Growth should always follow operational maturity rather than precede it.

What metrics will define the success of this partnership over the next three to five years—clinical outcomes, profitability, patient volumes, or network expansion?

Financial sustainability is important because it allows continued investment in quality. However, it cannot be the primary measure of success.

We will evaluate this partnership through a balanced scorecard that includes clinical outcomes, patient satisfaction, laboratory quality indicators, clinician retention, research output, operational efficiency and sustainable financial performance. If patients continue to trust us and clinical outcomes continue to improve while we responsibly expand access, we would consider that genuine success.

As a pioneer who has shaped fertility care in India, what do you believe will be the biggest disruption in the sector over the next decade, and how is Santaana preparing for it?

The future of reproductive medicine will be shaped by the convergence of artificial intelligence (AI), genomics, precision medicine and advanced embryology. These technologies have the potential to improve diagnosis, personalise treatment and enhance clinical decision-making.

However, technology should augment clinical judgement rather than replace it. The human aspects of fertility care—empathy, counselling, ethics and trust—will remain irreplaceable.

Santaana's vision is to build an institution that embraces scientific innovation while preserving the compassionate, patient-centred approach that has always defined our practice. That combination of technology, clinical excellence and ethical care will be the foundation of our future.

Narayan Kulkarni

narayan.kulkarni@mmactiv.com