



Annu Puri

Architecting the 'Clinical Shield' to Define a New Paradigm of Protective Advocacy and Clinical Excellence in Cross-Border Healthcare



Anjali Sharma | The CEO Magazine

India's surgical landscape is a powerhouse of robotic precision and AI-driven diagnostics. Yet, for an international patient, this world-class infrastructure often feels like an impenetrable labyrinth. The science is sophisticated, but the journey remains fragmented, leaving a critical gap between clinical excellence and human certainty.

Annu Puri recognised this disconnect early. What began as an observation evolved into a mission: to build a "Clinical Shield" for global patients that blends high-tech medicine with radical patient advocacy. As Director of IndiCure Health Tours, Annu has engineered a platform that bridges distance, complexity, and uncertainty into seamless cross-border healthcare.

A Foundation of Precision and Purpose

Annu Puri's leadership trajectory was forged at two of India's most prestigious institutions: AIIMS, New Delhi, where she earned her Bachelor of Science; and TISS, Mumbai, where she completed her Master's in Healthcare Management. It was within these corridors that she internalised a defining paradox: "while logic runs a business, empathy runs a service".

The pivotal shift in her mindset occurred when she witnessed the sheer 'fear of the unknown' that people face when dealing with healthcare, especially when availed across borders. Amidst world-class hospitals and exceptional doctors in India, she saw international patients navigating a labyrinth of uncertainty. The realisation was immediate: medical expertise is only half the cure; the other half is the 'handhold', the feeling of absolute safety.



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Director - IndiCure Health Tours Pvt. Ltd.

In an industry historically driven by cold metrics, Annu recognised the strategic value of what is often labelled a "soft" trait. She saw that a woman's instinct to notice the human details others overlook could become a competitive advantage. IndiCure was born from that conviction, not as a travel enterprise, but as a clinical bridge built on radical empathy and disciplined execution.

Her ambition was not merely to launch a company but to redefine the experience of cross-border care, ensuring that a patient travelling thousands of miles feels guided with the confidence and security of family. As she says, "Trust is the most expensive currency in the world."

IndiCure Health Tours: Redefining Cross-Border Care

IndiCure Health Tours is a medical travel and patient advocacy organisation that serves as a clinical bridge between world-class healthcare in India and patients across the globe. Founded in 2005, with operations commencing in 2010, it was built with a clear ambition: to set the global gold standard in medical travel and position India as a trusted hub for high-tech, empathy-led healthcare excellence.

Over the past 15+ years, IndiCure has specialised in delivering a white-glove, end-to-end experience for individuals seeking complex surgical interventions, including orthopaedic, cardiac, bariatric, and cosmetic procedures. Its model extends far beyond appointment facilitation, integrating surgeon selection, transparent financial planning, on-ground coordination, guest hospitality and structured post-operative follow-up into a cohesive care ecosystem.

In a landscape often driven by transactions, IndiCure positions itself as a patient advocacy partner rather than a booking service. Each engagement is treated as a long-term responsibility, guiding patients through clinical and emotional complexities with the assurance of an extended support system, even after the patients travel back home.

A Culture Built on Advocacy and Competitive Empathy

At the core of IndiCure's differentiation is its people philosophy. The organisation approaches care not as a process but as a human responsibility, an outlook shaped by what Annu describes as "Competitive Empathy," where scientific rigour is balanced with deeply personal attention.

This philosophy extends into how IndiCure builds its teams. The organisation recruits advocates rather than staff, professionals with healthcare expertise and the emotional intelligence required for patient-centric care. Through a mentorship-led approach, entry roles are intentionally developed into leadership pathways, particularly for women, positioning empathy as a professional strength while sustaining retention through purpose-driven work.

Operating from Mumbai and Delhi with a focused team of 18 professionals, IndiCure serves patients primarily from the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, markets where access delays and rising treatment costs continue to drive demand for reliable cross-border care.

The Evolution of Leadership: Annu

Annu's leadership has moved beyond logistics and quality control. In today's volatile healthcare landscape, she leads through agility, transparency, and radical empathy.

From Control to Empowerment

The turning point in Annu's career was trading top-down control for distributed trust. By empowering her teams to make real-time decisions, she didn't just improve morale—she anchored the organisation through a period of 3X growth amidst global uncertainty.

"I SEE MY ROLE AS A CALM ANCHOR," ANNU EXPLAINS. "BY PRIORITISING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY FOR MY TEAM, I ENABLE THEM TO ACT AS A 'HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP' SHIELD FOR EVERY PATIENT WE SERVE."

Redefining Credibility

Navigating a traditionally patriarchal medical ecosystem required a strategic pivot. Annu reframed the perception of IndiCure from a “support service” to a critical clinical partner by grounding every move in data, outcomes, and ROI.

She effectively dismantled the stereotype that women-led leadership is “soft,” proving instead that empathy is a clinical advantage. Her model of “sophisticated care” directly links empathy-driven systems to faster recovery times and reduced clinical risk.

A Scalable Human Core

By transitioning from a founder-led approach to a distributed model, Annu has built a resilient, women-led structure. It is a system designed to scale with precision without ever losing its human pulse.

The True ROI of Healthcare

For Annu, success in 2026 is defined by “freedom of movement”, seeing patients once constrained by long wait times regain mobility and independence within weeks of treatment. She measures impact not in volume but in restored quality of life and access to once-unreachable care.

Over 15 years, IndiCure has evolved from a startup into a global advocacy-led platform serving 60+ countries across key international markets in developed countries. The organisation has recorded strong post-pandemic growth, accelerated access to advanced surgical technologies, and transitioned into a trusted clinical partner for leading surgeons and hospitals in India.

The Shift Toward Predictive, Value-Based Care

Staying ahead of disruption, Annu blends scientific vigilance with adaptive leadership, ensuring IndiCure evaluates technology for clinical impact rather than optics. The organisation prioritises robotic-assisted surgery, tele-health triage, and AI-led diagnostics in oncology and genomics to enable personalised treatment pathways, reduce recovery time, and streamline care before patients arrive in India.

She is currently leading IndiCure’s transition from a traditional facilitator to a tech-enabled patient advocacy ecosystem, integrating Predictive AI with High-Touch Human Care, advancing value-based decision-making, and reinforcing transparency through outcome data and patient advocate roles. As she puts it, *“In a field where the product is a human life, standing still is not an option.”*

Over the next 3–5 years, she envisions IndiCure evolving into a Global Health Intelligence Hub, expanding its presence across key international markets, strengthening pre- and post-operative support networks, and leveraging predictive analytics to match patients with surgeons based on clinical success metrics. Her long-term focus also includes advancing ethical, sustainable care models and contributing to global conversations around standardising patient rights across borders.

Leadership Mantra

Annu credits mentorship and peer networks as critical anchors in her leadership journey. While a single vision may launch an enterprise, she believes community sustains it. Trusted circles have provided perspective, foresight, and the strategic clarity required to navigate complex healthcare ecosystems and the nuances of leading a woman-led organisation.

She draws inspiration from leaders such as Indra Nooyi’s performance with purpose, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw’s pioneering resilience, and Mother Teresa’s lesson of ‘The Power of One’, which continue to shape her balance of scale and sensitivity. Her advice to aspiring women leaders is direct:

“LEAD WITH UNAPOLOGETIC EXPERTISE AND AUTHENTIC EMPATHY. MASTER YOUR DATA SO YOUR RESULTS SPEAK FOR YOU. IF A PATH DOESN'T EXIST, BUILD IT. AND NEVER FORGET, EMPATHY IS NOT A SOFT SKILL; IT IS YOUR GREATEST COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.”