'Medical Mall' to benefit public healthcare sector

The concept of a "Medical Mall" has created a new stir in China. Medical industry observers are suggesting the one-stop hospital will complement China's existing healthcare system, with patient's safety remaining the bottom line, reports jiemian.com.

Located in a shopping center in Hangzhou, the mall is a mix of specialist outpatient services, making it possible for patients to access one-stop medical services all in one place.

A total of 13 clinics have reportedly signed up for the mall, with 10 starting trial operations.

These medical outlets are able to share space, equipment, operating theaters and other resources, adopting the sharing economy concept.

First started in the U.S. in the 1980s, the concept of medical malls is not new. However, the Hangzhou project has drawn nationwide attention since gaining government approvals.

Some are applauding the idea, saying it will provide easier access to more cost-effective medical services, as well as help relieve China's overburdened public health care system.

However, others question whether the commercial institutions will be able to balance profits with the public interest.

There are also concerns being raised about the level of medical treatment, regulations and insurance.

Yu Xindong, an official with the Zhejiang Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission, while supporting the "Medical Mall" model, says patient's safety remains the essential red line.

"The 'medical mall' model helps non-governmental sectors to operate medical facilities with lower costs. Authorities need to give the concept room to grow, but also keep medical safety a bottom line," said Yu.

China has been encouraging private-sector involvement in the health care industry. In May, the State Council issued a document, vowing to build a "diversified" health care system by offering private capital easier access to the industry.

Private hospitals now account for more than 57 percent of all hospitals in China.