



## Press Article



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**Article Title** : **Ounce of prevention**: Competition in Thailand's booming private health-care industry now extends to the basic check-up, so it's wise to shop around

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**Ounce of prevention**: Competition in Thailand's booming private health-care industry now extends to the basic check-up, so it's wise to shop around.

Arokaya paramalapa, or no sickness, is the best blessing of all, is an ancient Pali saying that sums up a condition to which all of us aspire. No one should dispute that good health is the best luck one could wish for. Unfortunately, many people who are enlightened by this truth only reach this state after experiencing health difficulties.

These days, people are increasingly conscious about their health. Stressful urban lifestyles, pollution and other factors have given a rise to a huge growth industry comprising gyms and fitness centres, nutritional products, healthy mass-market foods and beverages, spa and wellness centres and many more. The hospital business in Thailand has also witnessed impressive growth and high competition as the country strives to position itself as a world-class destination for health care.

According to Kenneth Mays, the marketing director at Bumrungrad Hospital, the competition in the market among private hospitals has led to major and costly upgrades in services and technology as a means to distinguish themselves from the competitors. While some hospitals specialise in certain types of treatments and surgery, the competition now extends to the most basic of medical services, the physical check-up.

Mr Mays says most major hospitals have been offering different types of physical check-up packages at promotional prices and discounts to attract more customers, in the hope that they will return when they need other forms of treatment in the future.

"There has been more marketing and price promotion every year. There has never been a slowdown in marketing and advertising spending throughout these years ... not even this year when the economy isn't doing all that well," Mr Mays notes.

This year, he says, Bumrungrad has continued to grow at the double-digit rates it experienced last year. For physical check-up services, the business is as good as last year with more than half of the business coming from high-end clients seeking comprehensive and more sophisticated check-ups.

"And we are seeing more demand from Thai rather than foreign clients," he adds.

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### What does 'Bumrur mean?

This Thai word - pror Bahm-roong-RAHT - "care for the people"

Typically, clients prefer to shop around among various hospitals to compare prices. However, Mr Mays warns that the clients must make sure that they are not seduced by clever marketing.

One tactic to watch for, he says, is the tendency to quote a high price and then cut it to create the impression that a great bargain is being offered. Customers therefore must be very careful these days, he concludes.

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