The Immense Potential of M-Care in India: Catering Better to Patients Needs in the Context of a Fragmented Healthcare System

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ABSTRACT

A significant fact must be underlined to understand the potential of M-health in India: the poorest sections of the populations have mobile phones, but not always access to clean water. While this may seem unfortunate, this reflects the immense potential and readiness of the population for newer approaches and modes of access to healthcare. In fact, digital healthcare platforms have sprouted in the last couple of years, seeking to supply sophisticated services to a broad number of citizens. While the advances in M-health care in India are relatively new, the future is extremely promising and services are growing in this direction. With a population of over one billion and three hundred, opportunities for new ideas and new systems to benefit a multitude of patients are manifold.

KEYWORDS

M-Health India

Regarding basic healthcare services, the needs in India, with a population of over 1.25 billion, remain immense. The recent and sustained economic growth has contributed to diversification and an increasingly complex mosaic of health service options. The private sector has grown to become the dominant healthcare provider, leading to higher costs for services. Inadequate infrastructure, a lack of healthcare professionals in non-urban areas and the limitations of state spending have all contributed to making healthcare access difficult to the majority of people.

From a state to another, there exist significant variations in the modes of public financing over health, leading to uncertainty as to whether a centralized approach can be adopted. The level of state funding has certainly remained low and widely insufficient to cater to an ever-increasing population. India’s rural population makes for 67% of its entire population, yet half of its hospitals are located in urban areas (World Bank, 2015). What is more, the number of government hospital beds in urban areas is estimated to be twice the number of that in rural areas. Nearly a third of Indian citizens live outside urban centers, sometimes in very remote areas. The lack of physical access to healthcare due to poor infrastructure and connectivity, added with a relative scarcity of services in smaller cities, is a major concern to them. That applies to both preventive and curative healthcare and leads to disastrous consequences. Further, social stigma and privacy concerns may act as additional barriers to healthcare access.

The private sector is organically growing and somewhat filling in some of the gaps in health services. While this could be commendable at least in the short term, various problems have ensued. Private expenditure of people in India on health is becoming higher and, in fact, is one of the highest

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