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Current Trends and Challenges in the Healthcare Sector

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Abstract

Sound health is one of the most important prerequisites for any society. This goes to the extent that right to healthy living is considered by many jurists as a fundamental right. Hence, provision of ideal healthcare is expected of every state that cares for its citizen. Healthcare sector is supposed to comprise of a diverse mix of stakeholders from public as well as private sectors of the society. The role of the state is to act as a regulatory authority for maintaining quality in health services. In the cyber age when information technology and the internet have transformed every aspect of human existence, healthcare sector has also undergone unimaginable changes. This brief paper takes a closer look at some of the key changes faced by the healthcare services in recent times especially those which are of contemporary relevance in the post-pandemic phase.

Keywords: Healthcare, digitization, pandemic, artificial intelligence, virtual care

Introduction:

The World Health Organization (WHO), in its draft document, emphasizes the right to health in substantial details and links it to a life of dignity irrespective of an individual's age, sex, race, socioeconomic background or ethnicity. This right is considered to be an inclusive one implying that everything that may influence the health of individuals or community has to be taken care of as a health issue. This broad view also covers things like access to potable water and pollution free atmosphere. The healthcare sector encompasses a wide array of businesses including medical services, manufacture of medical equipment or drugs, provide medical insurance, or otherwise facilitate the provision of healthcare to patients. Economically, healthcare sectors are pinpointed by a few distinct factors. Government intervention in
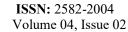
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healthcare markets and activities is pervasive, in part due to some of these economic factors. It is one of the largest and most complicated sectors in India.

The healthcare system hardly qualifies as such. Instead, it's a bewildering collection of extremely dispersed industries (Aiken et al., 2002). Even though the physician groups are increasing in size, 37% of practicing physicians still work in solo or two-person. With the market share of health maintenance organizations (HMOs) declining and preferred provider organizations (PPOs) becoming more popular, the health plan sector is moving away from structures that can allow integration and coordination.

India has a system of care that divides into various stems — *hospitals, home care, skilled nursing facilities* — with no formal communication, partnerships, or collaboration within and among them. The facilitators may not realize the responsibility for what happens to patients as they progress from one level of care to the next. There is no quality evaluation much thought, especially when it comes to tough hand-offs or transitions from one level of care to another.
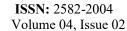
Review of Literature:

In view of vesting competition, the Indian government has begun to realise the importance of upgrading the health system for economic growth. In this context, the current study examines the relevant literature in order to precisely characterize the trends of healthcare sectors and create a rationale for its implementation. The examination of many researches will provide a broad spectrum of information regarding India's health system. According to Barro (1996), increasing longevity reduces the rate of depreciation of human capital, making educational investment more interesting. However, India has achieved significant progress in improving the health of its population during the previous five decades by building up health facilities and staff in elementary, secondary, and tertiary care in the government, voluntary, and commercial sectors (Ray 2003; Bhatt and Babu 2004). Health is another essential entitlement that improves poor people's "capabilities," resulting in an increase in "commodities" and a better health condition (Bloom et al 2004). Prevention and cure are treated as independent inputs into the family health production function by Grossman and Rand (1974). They presume that population with a low health capital stock depreciation rate demand preventive health care and those with a high health capital stock depreciation rate demand curative health care. This permits customers to treat prevention and cure as interchangeable terms.

Current Trends in the Healthcare Sector of India:

India is a vast country with an immensely diverse mix of population where a complex cobweb of social settings and intercultural relationships exists and which often has a bearing on a person's access of health too. Rapid digitization of facilities in the wake of the internet revolution has been a phenomenal leap in the direction of modernization. Radical changes in every walk of life are perceptible in every part of the globe. The wave of development has made a delayed advent in the Indian subcontinent and other developing countries but it is an inescapable reality of today. Some of the most obvious trends in the current healthcare sector can be conceptualized as follows:

1. **Hybrid care models combining virtual and in-person services:**

   The ongoing pandemic and the requirement for physical distancing was responsible for a major acceleration of virtual care over the last two years. The predominance of virtual care has elicited the major variations of healthcare settings. While virtual care and "telehealth" is undoubtedly here to stay, it will not overdraft the efficacy of in-person care. On the contrary, we can expect to witness the emergence of more of a hybrid, as care providers seek to offer patients the best of both worlds. Patients can expect to be encouraged to do more initial consultations through the medium of video call, wherein they would describe issues to a doctor, nurse, or physician's assistant, who can then assess the requirement and schedule a visit or tests in accordance. For times when a doctor needs to conduct a physical examination or where tests need to be performed, in-person care will remain as usual. This hybridization will effectively save time for patients and care professionals alike and make the entire process easy and accessible from arranging appointments to doing follow.

2. **Digitization of healthcare specialties:**

   Primary care visits aren't the only appointments that have moved to online mode. More and more healthcare specialties are indulging in the digital age — digital pathology would be a suitable example (Kraus et al., 2021). Whereas pathologists once had to do much of this work using a microscope for hours and peering at slides, which they can now be digitally photographed and viewed more easily on a large computer monitor, and this data becomes available for other consultations. Similarly, radiologists are
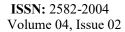
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utilizing the digitization of medical imaging. Scanning makes it possible to transmit an X-ray from a rural clinic so that it can be reviewed by a radiologist nationwide, and associated software can help to organize, prioritise, and read images (Menvielle et al,.2017). Virtual reality programs, meanwhile, allow a surgeon to "practice" an upcoming procedure using the patient's medical images.

3. **Increased AI usage:**

Artificial Intelligence has been adopted in healthcare facilities to enhance the output (Secinaro et al, 2021). Healthcare has been a little slower than other industries in integrating AI and machine learning, but the application inflow have been opened now — from scheduling and administrative tasks to identifying abnormalities in imaging. Till now, AI has been principally functioning as a kind of assistant, often functioning and helping at the backend to make the work of medical professionals faster or easier, but as programs tend to grow increasingly sophisticated, they will be able to perform more complex tasks, and may even graduate to being more akin to an experienced colleague than an assistant (Burton et al., 2019). The Patients are now investing their trust in AI as well, which will be a dominant factor in speeding up its adoption, and are especially open to its use in conjunction with an actual doctor. It has the potential to be extremely valuable; sometimes even demonstrating a focussed eye than the medical professional.

4. **Health systems data stored online in cloud:**

All of the above-mentioned trends rely on a complex technological foundation, which is why another innovation, moving health systems and data to the cloud; will be so important (Griebel et al., 2015). The healthcare industry has many sprawling networks, including those of universities and hospital systems, within which many stakeholders must be able to communicate — doctor's offices, radiology labs, pharmacies, health insurance companies, patients, etc. Cloud-based platforms are making novel systems like patient portals possible, offering interoperability and a secure way for important information to be transmitted quickly and easily from anywhere, at any time.

Conclusion:

The topic under discussion is pertinent for each one of us. As the foregoing discussion suggests, the healthcare sector in India is fraught with imperfections and shortcomings. It hardly caters
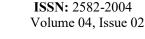
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to the needs of huge population of the nation which represents the densest colony of human beings on earth. Overpopulation coupled with poverty has made the healthcare infrastructure of India a grey area of public life. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has shown us a glimpse of how fragile this sector is at the moment. The way this sector brought the government to its knees is a scary tale of patients gasping for air and succumbing to death due to lack of basic healthcare requirements such as oxygen cylinders, PPE kits, and life saving drugs. Given this backdrop, the emergence of various trends in healthcare sector could not be summed into the above-described domains, rather the field extends way beyond the enumerated ones. The utilisation of these advance and inherent interdisciplinary approaches has led to the advancement of dissemination of healthcare facilities by the sector. This has led to the realisation that the multidisciplinary approaches are required to add to the present facilities and aid with the professionals.
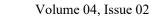
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