

Technology forms the backbone of our comprehensive solution portfolio for India

08 June 2018 | Interviews | By Sameer Bansal, Head- India Commercial Business, Optum Global Solutions

Optum is one of the leading information and technology-enabled health services business dedicated to help people live healthier lives and to help make the health system work better for everyone.



With more than 150,000 people worldwide, Optum delivers intelligent, integrated solutions that help modernize the health system and improve overall population health. Technological advancement has given many tools and innovations to healthcare providers and patients, but the need of the hour is to have solutions that provide integrated experience for both – consumers as well as providers of the care says Mr. Sameer Bansal, Head – India Commercial Business, Optum Global Solutions in a conversation with Bio Spectrum regarding healthcare technology in India.

Tell us something about the information and technology-enabled health services by Optum?

Optum is a part of UnitedHealth Group, a Fortune 5 company with 2017 revenues of \$200+ Billion. UnitedHealth Group was ranked No.1 in the insurance and managed care sector on Fortune's 2018 "World's Most Admired Companies" list.

Optum combines technology, data and expertise to improve the delivery, quality and efficiency of health care globally. We provide technology and business process solutions that enable health care organizations to modernize their technology infrastructure, reduce costs, and improve quality. Optum brings global health information technology expertise, best practices, and insights to the Indian public health system to help health care providers and government organizations improve affordability, accessibility and efficiency of patient care.

Technology forms the backbone of our comprehensive solution portfolio for India, which includes Tele health, 'My health center' or health and wellness centers, Integrated Health Management System (IHMS), and 'Smart Health City' solutions. With the convergence of Electronic Medical Records (EMRs), Health Information System (HIS), Telemedicine, analytics and Integrated Care Command Center (ICCC), these solutions can help make health care available in remote areas, reduce health care cost and ensure continuity of care. Our solutions enable effective population health management through data driven insights on health indicators while increasing adoption of public health programs through targeted community outreach and engagement.

Can you throw some light on the transformation that healthcare sector has witnessed in India with the introduction of Information Technology and how it is going to change the sector in future?

New models of care, especially in remote health, are being tested successfully, and technology is clearly an enabler. Today technology is pervasive across every aspect of healthcare, including patient care, process management and data management. Multiple point solutions across mother and child care, disease tracking, telemedicine, practice management, mHealth apps etc. have already had an impact on both public and private healthcare, across the country.

Going forward, technology driven transformation will be seen in three broad areas –

Information and intelligence: Cloud based solutions such as new age Electronic Health Records (EHRs) are now evolving and mobile apps are changing the way care providers and patients interact with the healthcare system. IOT health devices are evolving rapidly, allowing for real-time monitoring of patients. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the ability to fundamentally change the way we do triage, diagnosis and personalization of care.

Medical technology: Advancements in medical technology such as wearable devices, smartphone enabled ultrasounds, miniature ECGs and digital stethoscopes are redefining "access to care". Advancement in robotics is making a significant impact right from sophisticated prosthetics, to remote surgery. With miniaturization, bulky devices like ultrasound machines have been reduced to the palm of one's hand. Bio stamps will take another 5 to 10 years to go main stream but will be indispensable and pervasive. The growing trend of remote healthcare - Telehealth, teleradiology, teleophthalmology - is expected to continue and spread across many specialties.

Financial Technology (FinTech): IRDA is now allowing coverage of OPD expenses in some cases, and the National Health Protection Scheme is poised to fundamentally change healthcare for the masses. Cashless medical support will be the norm in the next 5 years for many procedures. Digital payments and automated microfinance will fundamentally change the way we pay for care. A national level medical transaction clearinghouse, based on Block chain and AI, with cascading multi-level payments and settlements could be a game changer.

Another trend that will also have an impact on healthcare in India is the availability of high bandwidth in rural areas, electrification, increasing wind and solar footprints, as all these have a large role to play in sustainable transformation of rural primary care.

What are the future plans of the company? Any new products in the pipeline?

We look forward to working closely with the government for creation of a technology enabled, outcomes based healthcare service delivery infrastructure that integrates traditionally discrete segments – pharma, providers and players in a patient centric model.

What according to you are the health IT trends that are going to set up the healthcare industry?

The need of the hour is to bring global health information technology expertise, best practices, and insights to the Indian public health system to help government organizations provide high quality and affordable patient care. Some of the healthcare solutions that can really help make the healthcare delivery system more efficient are telehealth, Integrated Health Management System (IHMS), and redefined health and wellness centers.

In the current environment of a shortage of healthcare professionals, greater incidence of chronic conditions, and rising healthcare costs, telehealth offers a potential tool to improve efficiency in the delivery of healthcare. Teleradiology can help transmit radiological images from one location to another. Teleophthalmology will help in delivering eye care through digital medical equipment and telecommunications technology. IHMS can provide end to end workflow management, integrated data collection, analysis and reporting at various stages of care delivery. With the central governments' recent announcements related to "Ayushman Bharat" and establishing health and wellness centers all over the country, there is a huge opportunity for better healthcare penetration.

Additionally, the following upcoming trends will drive the healthcare industry:

- Personal health monitoring devices (IOT) will change the way we track the health of individuals
- 3D printing will impact replacement of organs, exoskeletons, casts and beyond
- Technologies like Block chain will soon redefine how we populate and maintain electronic health records, and how we link them to payments, insurance etc.
- Artificial intelligence will increasingly assist physicians, health workers and care givers in triage, diagnosis and treatment
- Ingestible pill monitors, bio stamps, nutrition sensors, AI doctors - the opportunities are endless.