

Portea Medical studies demand dynamics of home healthcare services

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Consumer healthcare is gaining credibility among customers with long-term needs.



Portea Medical, India's leading consumer healthcare provider, has observed a major shift in the demand dynamics of home healthcare services. Apart from the huge existing demand among the elderly and those needing post-operative care, there has been a marked surge in the infants and adolescent segment for these services. About 7% of Portea's patients are below 14 years of age, and this segment is growing 1.3 times faster (CAGR of 70%) than the company's total patient base. Home care offerings today are positioned on 'convenience' and 'affordability' and have clearly found connect with the younger segment (early adopters of the tech-driven new age offerings).

With enhanced customer experience, this segment is going to be a huge asset to influence others to adopt home healthcare and return to home healthcare providers as and when healthcare needs arise in their lives. Consumer healthcare is gaining credibility among customers with long-term needs – something once only hospitals catered to.

Speaking about this, Ms Meena Ganesh, MD and CEO, Portea Medical, said, "There is a visible increase in the demand for home healthcare services in categories other than the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. There has also been an increase in requests for care in case of acute treatment conditions (which need immediate attention). The infant and adolescent group, unlike the young adults, includes those with more critical medical conditions such as palsy, delayed milestones, Down's syndrome etc. and thus, home care services like long-term physiotherapy, attendants, nursing etc. are availed. The organized home healthcare services segment has the potential to become one of the key pillars in medical tourism as it meets most of these criteria but lacks a regulatory framework. The private sector would benefit with support from the government in terms of proactive policies and standards to regularize the industry."

In 2015 Portea served monthly about 700 patients below the age of 12 years, this number is now almost 400%. The youngest active member availing physio services is about 2 years old. The basket of services in the infant and adolescent categories include neonatal care, hypertonia, torticollis (abnormal head position), physiotherapy for pre-term babies, cerebral palsy care, autism, Infantile epilepsy, Anaphylactic shock, Down's Syndrome, and juvenile arthritis. Portea's lab/basic physiotherapy offerings, and now nutrition, have created a consumer category, as opposed to the prescribed category by doctors/hospitals.

Apart from all these services, Portea also offers a carefully designed Kanga and Roo programme. Under this, Portea assigns a medically trained caregiver to help the mother with newborn baby care and also offers after-delivery care for the mother.

India's home healthcare market stood at around \$3.20 billion in 2016 and is expected to grow to around \$4.46 billion by 2018 and \$6.21 billion in 2020. Some social factors contributing to this growing demand for home care include the taboo surrounding institutional care for ageing parents, higher levels of perceived stress, social isolation, lack of work-life balance and negative impact on the emotional well-being of the family caregivers, and the fact that informal structures of support are unable to cope with the commitment required to take care of chronic patients and the elderly.