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Medical errors are the third leading cause of death in many countries

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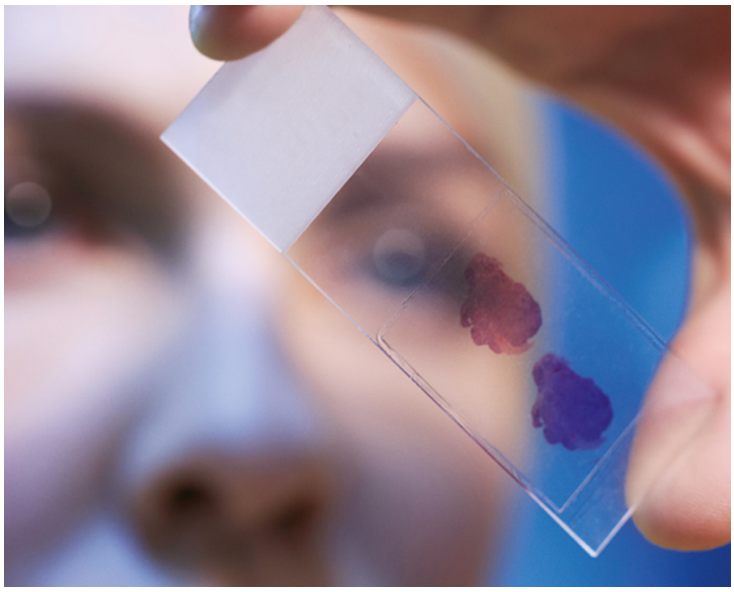
Chris Sullivan, Global Healthcare Practice Lead, Zebra Technologies talks about medical errors



Can you elaborate on the kind of solutions Zebra Technologies offer in the healthcare space?

We are US based company with 8000 employees, we have about four and a half billion dollars in sales. We provide advanced technology products to all industries and help automate workflow make things more productive, make things more safer.

We have printers that are designed for healthcare sector along with labels, healthcare banding in digital space and other healthcare tools such as smartphones, tablets, mobile computers. We have automation with RFID products and Bluetooth Low Energy tagging products for real time location. And we've recently made a number of acquisitions to have software and intelligence solutions.

Can you throw some light on your presence in India?

We have over 1000 employees working at our India office already. We do business with many of the largest pharmaceutical companies in India. We are the exclusive provider for temperature monitoring solutions for these companies. A lot of the pharmaceutical business in India is export business and hence we ensure the safety of the products along with proper cold chain. We are working with large healthcare organisations including the hospitals like Max healthcare and others. We are pretty active in India and see it as an important part of our company's business.

What are the most commonly occurring medical errors today?

It's important to recognise that medical errors are the third leading cause of death in many countries more commonly in case of the diseases like heart disease and stroke. It's a terrifying thought to think that you are going to a healthcare organisation to get your health fixed but end up making it worse. Medical errors come in many shapes and sizes, and many different variations.

There are cases like that of false patient identity leading to an operation or procedure going wrong on a wrong person. Identity mistakes are also very common in healthcare and can lead to very bad problems. One in every 18 blood collections is a specimen mistake which can result in false diagnosis.

So what I mean by that is we use barcode data standards in healthcare. We use scanners to authenticate the work to check that it's accurate. We put healthcare design printers at the point of care and health care. So the label is attached correctly to the patient as it happens. So it's not that the workers are not doing good work. They are humans make mistakes, I make mistakes, it's easy to, to accidentally miss something. Health cares about science, it's about detail about precision. And a very little mistake in your activity can have a very bad consequences for the patient. So we have carefully designed solutions to really reduce those types of mistakes. But still,

What are the major challenges faced when it comes to healthcare IT?

We live in a dual world right now where we have IoT and advanced technologies in some situations and paper based in others. What we see in a lot of organisations is that the especially the ones that have technology that many of the opportunities to reduce these errors exist, but the technology is not coordinating well. So the different systems are not inoperable, and therefore a lot of money's been spent, but the technology can make a bigger problem than what it was before.

Creating interoperability between different technologies to make them mesh and work better together is the need of the hour. We are trying and investing in capabilities to make those interoperability problems go away. Our team is working actively with AI & IoT to come out with various devices for healthcare sector.

Companies dealing with various technologies can fill the gaps by working as a community doing collaborations on open platform with open data exchanges. Also, having a strategy and proper digital roadmap is very important.

What are your strategies for the next five years?

We already have major technology projects with Hewlett Packard, Google and Android. Now, we are putting a lot of time into business to business relationships and working collaboratively together. We will continue to do that.