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"The growing awareness about COVID-19 through various interventions is helping flatten the curve"

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Gerald Jaideep, CEO, Medvarsity, Hyderabad talks about the ongoing situation of COVID-19



What are the current gaps in healthcare with regards to managing Covid19?

The COIVID-19 pandemic in India has observed an unexpected growth in the course of just two months. From merely 3 cases that were confirmed on February 15, the nation's healthcare has a burden of more than 20,000 patients suffering from the infection today. Consequently, our healthcare is facing a major infrastructural challenge, not only in terms of resources, but it is also falling short of skilled healthcare professionals.

Today, India has 0.7 doctors and 1.5 nurses per 1,000 people, while the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends 2.5 doctors and nurses per 1,000 people. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) addresses the skill gap in healthcare to be 97.9% across various disciplines, which only elevates our challenges. In this situation, when the country needs skilled professionals to fight with the pandemic, this huge gap is exposed and emerging as a major gap in the healthcare infrastructure of India.

Another major challenge faced by Indian healthcare in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak is the shortage of skilled professionals required to provide respiratory support to patients who have breathing difficulties due to ARDS. In this direction, while Defense Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU), Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), has taken up the responsibility of manufacturing 30,000 ventilators for Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and supplying across the country, there's a shortfall of skilled medical professionals, especially in the fields of pulmonology and intensive care. With less than 13,000 trained professionals that are equipped to provide mechanical ventilation to patients, we're looking at a huge challenge ahead.

How do you think education can help improve the current condition?

Education certainly plays a vital role in healthcare and is relevant not only to the medical professionals, but to society at large. The nation is at a stage when we are recognizing the importance of health education in common people and how it adds value to the public health of the country. The growing awareness about COVID-19 through various interventions is helping flatten the curve, and this awareness is possible only because of health education.

There is also a growing requirement to enhance the quality of care in the Indian healthcare ecosystem. Despite the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH) coming into the picture, some of our healthcare facilities still lack the infrastructure and proper standard operating procedures (SOPs) of clinical and non-clinical management that are necessary to meet the standards set by WHO and MoHFW.

This leads to an increasing need for training healthcare professionals in clinical and management skills. Additionally, the current crisis is making it imperative for them to gain the life-saving competence of mechanical ventilator management.

Today, the industry is observing a technological transformation as telemedicine is playing a vital role through which doctors can mentor on-site practitioners in treating patients suffering from COVID-19. However, there is a major skill gap in this sector too. It is important that healthcare professionals are equipped with skills required to manage eICUs that could play a vital role in mitigating a crisis like COVID-19, and this needs upskilling with specific training customized for skilled and under-skilled healthcare professionals.

Education has a huge role to play, not only in dealing with outbreaks like COVID-19 but improving the overall quality of care provided by healthcare facilities in the country. It is necessary for healthcare professionals to upskill in their specializations and gain skills essential in a situation of crisis in order to increase their contribution in the field of medicine, thereby helping India in strengthening the healthcare infrastructure and raise it to match the global standards.

How is Medvarsity helping in this context?

Medvarsity, as a part of Apollo's education focus, had the opportunity to observe the growth of this disease first hand. In early March, we released a "Certificate in Awareness & Management of Covid19" course aimed at the general public to get them better prepared for the disease. In the first 24 hours, we saw 20,000 people take the course, and by the end of March, over 1.5 lac people from around 120 countries had taken the course. The same is now available in 5 different languages to ensure more and more people are aware.

In order to extend our reach, we partnered with FICCI, Indian Society of Critical Care Medicine, Boston Children's Hospital, and Apollo to launch Dosily.com as the premiere platform for online learning on COVID-19. We have hosted over 27 courses, 40+ expert speak sessions, state-of-art ventilator simulation and over 200 live ventilator training sessions. Every week, over 1500 doctors and medical professionals join the live classes and over 300 learners learn and train from the content we've placed on Dosily.com

Our goal is to help train 5 lac doctors on the various aspects of mechanical ventilation and on the clinical management of COVID-19 and through this tech-enabled platform, ensure that we can reach every corner of our country.

What's next for Medvarsity?

As the current crisis starts winding down, using technology-based learning platforms would have become the new norm across the country. Medvarsity already is one the largest tech-enabled medical learning organizations currently and through Dosily.com, we aim to enhance the reach even more. Dosily.com is designed as a just-in-time learning platform and will have 1000's of courses across 26 different specializations. Offered through a low cost subscription model, Dosily.com aims to democratize medical education and upskilling and bring the top experts from around the world to every computer, phone, and tablet. Our Ventilator Training partnership with ISCCM will also provide mentored support to clinicians across the country and hands-on support on any critical issue that they might face during mechanical ventilation.

Medvarsity's core courses that focus on long term upskilling will continue to strengthen the backbone of healthcare around the world through exceptional partnerships, detailed course coverage, and clinical observerships at some of the largest hospitals in the region.