

Lessons to be learnt from COVID-19

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The outbreak of COVID-19 is an unprecedented event which none of us have seen in our lifetimes and hope none of us will get to see this again. This pandemic came very swiftly, catching everyone unaware and causing a social and economic disruption across the globe. But there are a lot of learnings attached with this pandemic, especially for the healthcare system of our country.

The biggest insight is that people have acclaimed the importance and criticality of Primary/Preventive care & Family Medicine.

In the current scenario most of the pressure was created on the tertiary care facilities which was never anticipated or handled earlier. This has led to unavailability of beds for emergency cases as all the tertiary care centers were operating at their maximum threshold.

A paradigm shift in the way healthcare sector has been operating, is the need of the hour. An efficient and organized primary care network should manage the burden at primary & secondary levels while the tertiary care facilities should focus on emergency and chronic care patients.

This unprecedented scenario has showed the importance of shifting from curative care to preventive care. From illness based visit to longitudinal care. Preventive care is the best way of handling most of such infections.

The community needs to understand the value of adult vaccination which is still not popular in our country. Vaccination can help prevent many such deadly diseases as well as reduce the complications of many such individuals. We all know that COVID-19 is here to stay and prevention is the best way to handle it. So social distancing & hand hygiene have to be adopted as habits. Building immunity is next important step.

This current situation has also made people realize the importance of availability of basic healthcare monitoring devices at home. Monitoring devices like oximeter, glucometer, blood pressure monitor have become now a common household name especially for people with co-morbidities.

There are certain devices and apps as well which can help bridge the gap in patient's health records by storing critical data, medical data, daily activities, etc. at their fingertips and thus maintain real time monitoring.

Since inception, Healthspring has been advocating the concept and importance of Tele-medicine including tele-consultation. Telemedicine, including tele-consult, is envisaged to be an integral part of the new normal.

The outbreak of COVID-19 is changing the way people perceive telemedicine and the outlook of physical visit to the doctor in-person is witnessing a drastic shift. Over a period of time people have got used to the concept of seeking advice from doctors online.

The government is also urging people to make use of technological platforms to support the measures of social distancing. Technology- based healthcare service delivery is already witnessing a significant surge in the recent past where people are consulting doctors across specialties.

The first consultation on tele-health platforms can help separate the emergency cases form non-emergency ones. This will make healthcare more accessible, more widespread and convenient.

Going forward, tele-consultation can help push the concept of medical triage in the country, which is essential to ease the burden on healthcare professionals and infrastructure as a whole. Medical triage helps segregate emergency cases from non-emergency ones and earmarks the resources to those who need immediate care.

Another important lesson learnt is the importance of Mental Health in our country. COVID-19 has spread a lot of anxiety and stress. Healthspring believes that mental wellbeing should be an area of focus at the primary care itself.

Depression and stress are fairly common and their hardships are getting pronounced a lot in the recent past especially during the pandemic. Many individuals are living a contradictory life of a loving family, financial stability, and excellent social life but fail to accept the reality. Discussing mental disorder is one of the keys to overcome it. Awareness of this has to be made as common as going in for a routine health check or meeting a doctor for cold or flu.

Dr Gautam Sen, Chairman and Founder, Healthspring, Mumbai