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NASSCOM unravels AI for healthcare in India

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NASSCOM CoE organized 'The Fourth Dimension - Deciphering Telehealth'



NASSCOM Centre of Excellence for IoT/AI, under its Healthcare initiative LHIF (Lifesciences& Healthcare Innovation Forum) , organized a virtual conference themed 'The Fourth Dimension - Deciphering Telehealth', which also witnessed the launch of an exclusive research paper titled "Unraveling AI for Healthcare in India" by Lav Agarwal, IAS, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

The research paper was commissioned by NASSCOM Research team in collaboration with EY; it highlights how AI solutions can break the classic healthcare iron triangle providing quality care with improved accessibility and reduced cost. The report also showcases the AI enablement ecosystem in healthcare and lays down strategic bold plays for healthcare organizations to accelerate their AI adoption journey.

Delivering his welcome Keynote, Saurabh Gaur, IAS, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, threw light on 'India Transformation through AI' and said, "All emerging technologies will be the engines of growth for the nation. If we want a $5 trillion economy by 2025, we see that these technologies will be great enablers as we forward. There is a huge opportunity for the Indian IT companies also as they now contribute 8 per cent to Indian GDP and they can move forward. We look at technology to make healthcare more accessible and affordable. There are opportunities to have creative outcome modelling; when you have huge data you should be able to collate it and work around it to save lives. We would like to have industry partners for each field and collaborate with academia and government. Through the National e-governance system, we have exposed 1300 APIs to access different data sets. We are looking at an exciting future as we move ahead on these technologies."

Addressing the gathering, Chief Guest Lav Agarwal, IAS, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, stated, "We have an ongoing programme National Medical Network and we have created a structure for them which has National centre and several regional centres that will become the hub for telemedicine services. Then we have e-sanjeevni application developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) in Mohali; we are strengthening the application by making all the centres to start using this application and right now 24 states are using this application. We are the biggest tele-medicine provider in the world today. To make this application more robust, our friends can come up with good ideas. Can we have a chatbox on top of this application which can provide information to the consumer and can it be integrated in such a manner so that application starts thinking of clinical support decisions."

Saying that India was very prompt in coming up with tele-medicine guidelines when the lockdown was announced, Dr. Praveen Gedam, IAS, Additional CEO, Ayushman Bharat, National Health Authority, Govt of India, added, "The advantage that India has for AI-based clinical support system is the sheer amount of data that we have as it will help in a better quality of additional support systems. E-sanjeevani has already crossed 3 lakh consultations and MHA is already making one more tele-medicine platform. We want more such platforms so that people can benefit from the competition. We already are medical tourism hub and we can now become tele-medicine hub for the world also. We can scale up very fast as is evident from the success of the Aarogya Setu app, which reached 130-140 million downloads in a couple of months."

Sharing the advantages of tele-health services, Nick Passey, Vice President Digital & IT, International & Japan, AstraZeneca, UK, highlighted, "As a patient-centric organization, our ambition is to improve patient outcomes by facilitating their journey from awareness & diagnosis to treatment & recovery. We thus believe telehealth plays an important role in enabling patients' access to HCPs, especially with specialists in areas of non-communicable diseases."

"The focus on healthcare innovation has never been so important. CoE with its industry partners and support from MeitY and MoHFW, we are accelerating creation and Scaling of new technology solutions from startups and large companies," said Sanjeev Malhotra, CEO, NASSCOM COE.

One positive side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is the dominance of Telemedicine Platforms for patient/doctor consultations, especially when the social distancing is prevalent. "With the advent of new technologies such as IoT& AI, Telehealth is going to emerge as a strong healthcare delivery channel. It is not only a new channel, but cuts across and enhances the way care is delivered through Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Healthcare Channels," says Raghuram Janapareddy, Director of Healthcare & Life sciences, NASSCOM CoE and moderator of this virtual event. Dr. Reema Aswani from NASSCOM Research Team explained the highlights of the research report to the audience.

Meanwhile, other speakers discussed at length about 'Ethical & Legal Contours around TeleHealth' and 'Leveraging Telehealth for Health Insurance'.