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NATHEALTH survey reveals progress of digital health before COVID-19

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NATHEALTH - Healthcare Federation of India conducted a survey to understand the pre- COVID digital health scenario and provided insights into the current digital health scenario as well. The findings of the survey have implied that even before COVID-19 hit India, the move towards digital health was significant and COVID-19 has played a pivotal role in accelerating the pace and also made digital health usage non-negotiable in the present times.

Key findings of the survey highlight that consumers were already using digital health services and were demanding increasing convenience and control. Before COVID, 61% of the patients were scheduling appointments through mobile apps and 70% of patients were using digital technology methods to monitor their health at home.

It also mentions that services like E- Pharmacy and Telehealth has played a pivotal role in making digital health a growing phenomenon in India and Government has also worked in pushing and enabling digital health. An important point that came out from the survey was that Government's Swasth app was being used prominently by the public and private players, plus the patients.

The survey also outlines top priorities to translate National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) into opportunities for the industry. Focus should be put on increasing awareness about the digital health platforms; strengthening regulatory framework, adoption and investment in digital health by building certain programmes, creating a coherent digital pathway, which can be useful for both public and private players, mandating doctors (both public and private practitioners) to provide teleconsultation, incentivise the providers using digital medium, boost digi-tech infrastructure, support digital health start-ups, ensure data ownership to avoid cyber security issues in maintaining health data, work in tandem with the private players to grow the digital health footprint across the country.

It has been recommended that capacity building is required from both the regulatory and the industry side to take any level of work on digital health ahead and there is a need to bring together relevant stakeholders for this to be achieved. It also highlights that there is need for a strong dialogue among states to float digital health into their systems.