

Virtualisation could truly democratize healthcare in India

22 December 2020 | Views

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Ever since the onset of the current times we are living in, healthcare & pharma sectors have been busy to keep things in perspective. After the sector dealing with essential commodities, these two sectors have seen the highest spur in demand for critical services. Luckily the Indian healthcare sector has set an example for others in terms of swift delivery of services and attending to medical emergencies around the country. All of these happened mainly because both the sectors were quick on their toes to adopt innovative technologies and virtualisation shares a major portion of the pie.

But educating everyone about the effectiveness seems to be the main challenge since a large part of the population prefers face to face interaction during consultation or buying prescription drugs from the pharmacy. Another challenge is reaching out to the not so savvy users who feel that virtual medical care is too complicated for them.

But the healthcare and pharma players are picking up really fast since they have got a first- hand experience of the benefits that come with the adoption of virtual technologies. For the healthcare sector virtual consultation saw a great demand from the families who have elderly patients. Since they are the most vulnerable group in terms of COVID-19 infection, consultation and immediate medical attention over virtual mediums came as a great relief. The experiential virtual platforms also acted as a great leveller for the sector as it helped with preliminary diagnosis and real-time assessment of emergencies.

The pharma sector also rode on the trend as some virtual platform went to the extent of creating virtual dispensaries and medical stores where people could access medicine catalogues and match prescriptions to order the right medicine, without physically going to the pharmacy. As a result, a lot of crisis arising out of medical emergencies were resolved swiftly by facilitating contact-less buying of essential drugs.

With this consumption trend of virtual services, the healthcare and pharma sectors can now foresee a future where a lot of other needs of the industries can be met through these virtual platforms. One such need is the need to deliberate on adoption of best practices and healthcare policy making. Earlier this used to happen through elaborate national and international

medical conferences.

But within a year the trend has gone through a transformation. The year has seen a lot of international medical conferences being organised by global healthcare organisations, completely on virtual event platforms. These conferences brought together leading practitioners and policy makers on various virtual platforms with a rich agenda to create some really meaningful conversations. In the past months, a lot of innovative best practices were adopted virtually. Some leading speciality hospitals have shown their enthusiastic support as virtual event platforms showed them great promises to create a roadmap for specialities like paediatrics, neurology, cardiology etc.

These virtual options perfectly match the needs of these sectors mainly because of the features that a virtual platform offers. If we take the example of medical conferences, they started with web conferencing software, but soon realised the limitations. Virtual event platforms on the other hand enabled these conferences to make conversations more fluidly and connect with medical professionals from around the globe more seamlessly. Personalisation, real-time networking and more engaging knowledge sharing are some other features that proved to be relevant and effective.

All these opened a new direction for tele-healthcare. With virtualisation coming in the picture dissemination of health-related information will be more effective and it will make medical intervention and monitoring more effective for long distance patients. It will also address the issue of travel restrictions and access to remote areas. Quick adoption of virtualisation and proper education will also solve another big challenge for the country ie, democratising healthcare and making quality healthcare accessible to people from every income group.

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