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Emerging need for new age hospitals

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Expectations from healthcare has been changing over time, necessitating changes in the way it is delivered. The last three decades has seen the emergence of newer technologies and delivery platforms, either directly related to or adoptable by healthcare. The medical fraternity, in turn, has kept pace by constantly adapting and upgrading their skill sets.

The flexibility to adapt, the already existing infrastructure and competencies at hospitals stood us in good stead during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic challenged us at many levels, be it available medical infrastructure, availability of medicines and consumables, availability of personnel, availability of personal protection kits or infection control practises, among others. It required agility, innovation and cost effective solutions to protect the healthcare workers, make hospitals safe for those who needed to avail of healthcare services during the pandemic while also taking care of those who had tested positive and needed care.

Given that the pandemic and its fallout will be palpable for some time to come, the need for the ‘new age hospitals’ has emerged. There is a need for fully equipped hospitals with infrastructure to treat both COVID and non-COVID patients across all specialties while ensuring that all safety protocols are adhered to.

During the pandemic, hospitals leveraged various technology platforms to offer telemedicine services. Consultations and medical management services were offered virtually, to allow for continuity of healthcare services, without necessitating physical contact between the patients and treating physicians. Unfortunately, there were those who suffer from chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, respiratory, cardiac issues among others who went without regular diagnostic follow tests or consultations. There were also those who preferred to wait before seeking consultation when symptoms first appeared resulting in emergency situations or a diagnosis when the condition was already advanced.

It is important that those who need medical attention should feel safe and confident in approaching hospitals for timely care. The learnings from the pandemic, have ensured that new age hospitals have stringent processes in place to segregate those who have test positive COVID-19 and those who those who test negative. They have also created facilities and space to isolate those who have tested positive and require emergency procedures. The healthcare teams have acquired the expertise and skills to care for COVID patient, providing and performing emergency surgeries on them while ensuring the safety of other hospital patients and healthcare workers.

The new age hospital uses available technology to make the patient flow through the system smooth and safe. The hospital attempts to reduce unnecessary in person interactions, maintains strict infection control practices, ensures social distancing, hand washing, use of appropriate masks, reduces waiting time in common areas for appointments and diagnostics, prevents crowding, avoids unnecessary visitors at the hospital to ensure safety of all patients, visitors and healthcare workers on the premises.

The new age healthcare system, is necessary to provide assurance to all those that need medical care that hospitals are safe places; the COVID pandemic is not a reason to allow aggravation of either their existing or acute ailments.

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