

eHealth India 2007

July 31 – August 02 2007, The Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi

BACKGROUND

Quality of public health and availability of proper healthcare amenities are one of the prime yardsticks for estimating the level of development and well being of any country or society.

Advent of powerful medical electronics coupled with latest tools of IT and communication technologies are bringing opportunities for advanced healthcare services including – faster and more accurate clinical diagnosis, efficient emergency response, complex health analytics, wide area disease surveillance, remote patient assistance, rural health solutions, along with quality enhancement in services through online and integrated health insurance solutions, healthcare financing, extended care management and awareness.

Spanning from primary healthcare to medical image archiving; complex forecasting of health hazards or even performing critical surgical procedures - technology is leveraging healthcare at all fronts.

However, ground realities and challenges still looms large - burgeoning population pressure, inadequate number of qualified doctors and paramedical staff, concentration of healthcare facilities in urban centres, lack of standardisation in service delivery and paucity of public funding are prime challenges in improving health status in India vis-à-vis the developing world.

INTRODUCTION

eHealth India 2007 was marked with power packed conferencing and networking sessions, which addressed some of the most pertinent issues of the healthcare sector, by way of engaging top notch policy makers, public health

specialists, academicians, technology developers, health industry experts, development agencies and civil society practitioners.

The two days of the event witnessed an arduous effort to explore opportunities of technology leveraged public health systems and find ways of efficiency gains and value additions for multiple stakeholders in the healthcare ecosystem.

Presence of eminent experts from countries like Canada, Singapore and Norway and their process of engagement through presentations and discussions on policy interventions, research agenda and technology solutions helped in analysing situations in India with reference to developed nations.

Furthermore, it also provided opportunity for solution vendors to gauge future needs of health sector, showcase latest innovations and technology applications on offer, investigate market potential and deliberate on issues pertaining to stakeholders at large.

Session I (Opening Session): 'ICTs in Healthcare - Prospecting Public Health Transformation'

Delivering the 'keynote address' in the opening session of the conference Smt. Aradhana Johri, Jt. Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India outlined the healthcare policy of the country, while emphasising government's commitment towards adopting ICTs for improving public health services in rural and urban areas, disease surveillance projects and data surveys. While being candid in expressing the government's vision to improve overall public health system in India by means of suitable technology applications, Ms. Johri highlighted her concerns about ground realities that often plagues such initiatives. Taking Bihar as a case in point, she described

the near impossibility of using high-end technology in a low literacy and politically unstable environment. However, she expressed hope in achieving success in such environments with simple ICT tool such as telephone or mobile phones.

The first 'special address' of the conference delivered by Michael Clarke, Director - ICT4D, IDRC, Canada was an eye opener to the crucial issue of 'information as a cornerstone of public health'. His deep insight in this matter, punctuated by startling revelations through research data, established the critical factors of accurateness, access and management of medical records for ensuring error-free healthcare service.

Dr. Ranjan Dwivedi, National Professional Officer (eHealth), WHO – while delivering the second 'special address', gave a comprehensive presentation about various e-health initiatives of the WHO. While emphasising the healthy economic position of India brought through the attainment of excellence in IT, he mulled over the fact that India is still way behind the developed world in terms of public health standards and it still has one of the highest disease instances in the world. As recommendations for improvement of such prevalent conditions in India, he underlined the need for suitable technology solutions, higher adoption of local language computing and need for more nursing colleges and paramedical training facilities in the country.

Trevor Hodge, Sr. VP (Investment Strategy & Alliances), Canada Health Infoway – while delivering the 'guest address', appropriately brought in a developed world perspective on public healthcare system and presented the conceptual framework of Canada Health Infoway (an SPV of Canadian government) for efficient

investment of public funds in health system modernisation. In his highly informative presentation, Mr. Hodge traced the evolution in public healthcare management in Canada and expenditure patterns on IT in the health sector. In terms of new developments in this sector, he finds enormous potential in delivery of clinical services using e-health technologies.

Session II: 'Improving Public Health Through Technology Interventions - Development Sector Perspective'

Role of development sector and international agencies in Indian healthcare sector, particularly with regard to rural interventions and public

affordable telemedicine solutions in areas of rural healthcare, health surveys, awareness programs and immunization campaigns. Almost all three speakers underlined the need to analyse local conditions and suitability factors while selecting technology applications for rural healthcare.

Session III: 'Hospital Information Management System (HIMS) - Leveraging IT for Seamless Patient Care'

Healthcare is known to be one of the most information intensive and data critical discipline. Accuracy, completeness and timeliness of data and information, and ease of accessibility

Head-IT, Wockhardt Hospitals and Amit Kumar, CIO, MAX Healthcare highlighted IT architectures of some these big hospitals and underlined a compelling need of service providers to develop patient centric IT strategy, which at the same time, equally aligns with overall hospital work flow and its clinical processes. It was encouraging to find the level of IT sophistication adopted at these facilities with almost all of them having full scale EMR and PACS implementations.

Claire Medd, Regional Healthcare Manager (Asia Pacific), Intel Corporation and Seema Gupta, Consultant, Wipro Health Care IT talked about latest innovations in healthcare solutions of their respective companies. While Intel corporation is more upbeat about bringing personal mobile healthcare devices for the domestic market, Wipro Healthcare reaffirms the resounding success of their HIS solutions and their newly launched mini-HIS offering for the SME segment service providers.

Session IV: A Special Session on 'Health Hiway' – an Apollo Hospitals & IBM Initiative

The concluding session of the second day had a special presentation on 'Health Hiway' initiative – a collaborative effort of Apollo Hospitals and IBM, towards building a 'National Health Data Network' for providing a full range of service offerings for the healthcare community. Conceptualised and developed at Apollo, this unique and first-of-its-kind initiative in India will ride on IBM's IT infrastructure to roll out best-in-class applications for improving clinical and financial performance of hospitals.

This special session was conducted and delivered by the senior executives of the Health Hiway team comprising – Ashvani Srivastava, President-Strategic Initiatives, Apollo Hospitals Group, Mohammed Hussain Naseem, VP – Healthcare, IBM and Srivathsan Aparajithan, Head – Healthcare Business Solutions, IBM.

Session V: 'Community & Public Healthcare- Solutions, Best Practices, Challenges'

The third day of the event began with a session that attempted to explore



health research, deserves a special mention in any forum on healthcare. With an attempt to involve them in the process and infuse a wider perspective on technology interventions in public health, this special session focused on the development sector.

Chaired by Michael Clarke, Director - ICT4D, IDRC, Canada this session had three eminent speakers – Dr. J.P. Misra, Principal Specialist (Health Sector Support), GTZ HSS India; Dr. Susheel Oommen John, Consultant, The Leprosy Mission Trust India and Dr. Shabbir Syed Abdul, Dept. of Telemedicine & eHealth, University of Tromso, Norway. The session delivered an overview of institutional efforts in using low-cost technologies and

are at the core of service development strategy of any healthcare institution. Involvement of multiple departments and practice groups in patient diagnosis and treatment, and often, the need of post-treatment monitoring for extended medication period renders a typical complexity to IT architecture of hospitals.

Chaired by Dr. Ashok Kumar, Dy. Director General, Central Bureau of Health Intelligence, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India the HIMS session brought together 5 eminent speakers from among top tier healthcare service providers and solution vendors.

Presentations by Manish Gupta, CIO, Fortis Healthcare; Pradeep Vaidya,

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Medical College, New Delhi; S K Meher, Sr. Programmer, AIIMS, New Delhi and Manish Chawla, Polycom.

Session VIII: 'Future of Integrated Healthcare: policy implications-standarisations – delivery models-best practices'

The conference concluded with a lively panel discussion which delved deep into issues and insights of two days of deliberation with an attempt to envisage the emergence of an integrated healthcare environment.

Moderated by Dipanjan Banerjee, Product Lead, eHealth Magazine - the panelists included Trevor Hodge, Sr. VP (Investment Strategy & Alliances), Canada Health Infoway; Werner van Huffle, Health & Human Services Industry Strategist, Public Sector Group, Microsoft Asia Pacific; Sandeep Sinha, Program Manager-Healthcare Delivery & Health IT (South Asia & Middle East), Frost and Sullivan;

Dr. BS Bedi, Convener of National Task Force on Telemedicine, Ministry of health & Family Welfare, GoI & Ex-Director Telemedicine DIT, GoI; Rajeev Sood, Industry Head- Public Services, SAP and Nabaroon Goswami, Dy. General Manager, e-Meditek Solutions.

The conclusion that emerged from the discussion reaffirmed a broad consensus among the panelists on the idea that standards of public healthcare are at different and often varied levels of maturity in different geographies. Each model must suit the socio-economic and demographic situation it serves and must reflect out-of-the box thinking for tackling local challenges. Technology is unanimously accepted as an enabler for healthcare management and need for more public-private partnership has been called for. In the same tune, it is also required to have an integrated healthcare model, allowing sharing of the basic clinical data. Public health policies too need to have a dedicated focus on IT and service standardisation norms.

Wishing you a e-Healthy year ahead! ■

*Look out for
eHealth India 2008*

innovative solutions, case studies and best practices of technology usage in community healthcare in India. Probably the most pertinent discussion topic for any healthcare conference in India, this session brought together a highly eminent panel consisting of Dr. K. K. Ghosh, Head- Medical Electronics & Telemedicine Division, Dept. of IT, Govt. of India; Dr. S B Gogia, President, IAMI; Dr. K. Ganapathy, Head- Apollo Telemedicine Networking Foundation; Dr. Rakesh Biswas, Associate Professor, Dept. of Medicine, Melaka Manipal Medical College, Malaysia and Nalini Gupta, Marketing Advisor- Chairman's Office, Reliance Communications.

A number of initiatives from across government, academic and corporate sectors were brought forth and discussed with in-depth detail and dexterity, which generated a high octane brainstorming with speakers and audience alike.

Session VI: 'Insurance, Banking & Healthcare Outsourcing Imperatives of eHealth Adoption'

While IT and electronics are sweeping the healthcare industry, opportunities are galore for insurance firms, banking institutions and healthcare outsourcing companies to offer valued-added services and capitalise in this widening business ecosystem.

Chaired by Trevor Hodge, Sr. VP (Investment Strategy & Alliances), Canada Health Infoway, the session had captivating presentations by Kamalnaini Sharma, Regional Maanager

- Rural & Agri Business, ICICI Lombard and Anand Rangachary, Managing Director(South Asia & ME), Frost & Sullivan. While Kamal showcased the online health insurance application and processing systems of ICICI Lombard and their value-added services for individuals and hospitals, Anand presented the market potential for financing and healthcare outsourcing industry covering healthcare sector investments, clinical research outsourcing, offshore diagnostics and medical transcription.

Session VII: 'ICTs for Medico-Healthcare Education - Capacities@ Classroom'

To ensure that technology and IT investments in healthcare finds adept hands to make them work at highest levels of efficiency, capacity building of doctors, paramedics, nurses and health administrators is of prime importance. Introduction and usage of ICT tools in classrooms and training programs forms the basis for fulfilling such requirements.

Chaired by Dr. Ved Prakash Mishra, Chairman, Post-Graduate Medical Education Committee, Medical Council of India & VC, Datta Meghe Instt. Of Medical Sciences, Nagpur this session highlighted some of these initiatives at medical colleges and corporate enterprises. The speakers were Dr. P.S. Reddy, VP(Operations) & Chief Content Officer, Medvarsity Online Ltd; Dr. Dr. Achal Gulati, Professor, Maulana Azad