



Venky: Hi! My name is Venky Ananth. I head the Infosys healthcare business globally. This is an edition of our podcast series around healthcare, and I'm very excited to have Saurabh Gupta with me here. Saurabh is the Chief Strategy Officer for HFS. Saurabh, can you tell us about what HFS is all about?

Saurabh: Sure. Thanks for having me here, Venky. HFS is a global analyst firm. We look at the emerging technologies, from robotic automation to Artificial Intelligence, smart analytics, Blockchain and IoT. But the focus for us is what's the impact of these technologies on businesses on different industries - healthcare being one of the primary focus for us - because there is what I call as the East versus West divide. What's happening is the West Coast keeps coming up with new technologies almost every day, and the East Coast is still struggling to adopt those. And I think we sit in the middle, trying to help both on what's the application of these technologies? What are the challenges and how do you actually make use of that?

Venky: Great. Saurabh, everybody is talking about consumerization of healthcare. Everybody is talking about putting patient at the centre of the healthcare universe. What does this really mean? Is this really happening? What is your perspective, Saurabh?

Saurabh: Yeah, I think to be honest, I think patient should have always been at the centre of healthcare. It shouldn't be just now or in the future but it should have been always. And I actually don't like saying patient being in the centre. It has to be consumer because not everybody is a patient... it derogates the healthy people. But I think so far what has been happening in terms of the patient centricity is the industry has been giving a sort of lip service to it, right? We've just been talking about a sexy UI. But does a sexy user interface means real good customer experience? It does not. And that's why we've been talking about the One Office. And that essentially means that we should move away from this siloed vision - there's a front office, there's a middle office, and there's a back office - but there should be just One Office and that's the office that caters to the customer.

I think what's happening now is there are a lot of these emerging technologies that are making that vision of the One Office more of a reality. That, to me, is what patient centricity really means... to sort of break the silos that we have - be it a payer or a provider or even a life sciences firm - from this siloed thinking of this is the front office, and the front office is the only one who connects to the patient or consumer. But I think if you look at it, if you look at things like revenue cycle management, doesn't billing impact the patient? It does. That to me is what patient centricity really means.

Venky: Basically rally the entire organization around the consumer, and ensure that they deliver to what the consumer cares about?

Saurabh: Exactly. I think we've had a lot of discussions with CIOs, CFOs, and everybody in both payers and providers. And I think while there are differences of opinions on what my performance metric is versus what your performance metric is, nobody would say no to ultimately what I need to do is care for my consumers. So I think it really helps to rally the whole organization around that One Office concept. And I think if you if you can do that, then you're halfway there.

Venky: Perfect. So that's a great segue into the next question that comes to my mind, Saurabh, which is the emergence of retail clinics. Now, with CVS' acquisition of Aetna, or for that matter, even Walmart, there seems to be a great shift from having a front door for healthcare, which is your retail stores, becoming the place where patients or members or consumers can walk in and actually interact with somebody and consume healthcare in its full shape and form. What's your opinion on this? And is this a trend that is going to be the way forward or is this something that CVS is doing because they acquired Aetna, and they have all these stores?



Saurabh: Look, I think following up from my One Office conversation that we were just having is, if we believe that patient centricity is the be-all and end-all for the health care industry, which I think we do, then I think even One Office is not enough, right? Because let's say you're a payer or a provider... you don't own the consumer. The consumer has to deal with so many different stakeholders, and here in the US, it's super complicated. You have to deal with the payer, you have to deal with the provider... it's a very highly fragmented delivery.

So even if one entity creates that One Office, that doesn't determine the patient experience. And that's why we believe in this hyper-connected future state, wherein an ecosystem needs to evolve, where the patient needs to have somewhat of a seamless experience between the payer and the provider, and the life sciences and the government or whoever is involved. And I think it's very hard because in the healthcare industry, we don't like each other too much, right? The payers don't like the providers, nobody likes the life sciences, and the government is doing its own thing. So it's very hard to create that ecosystem.

And that's why we've seen, like the CVS-Aetna acquisition that you mentioned, I think it's much easier to acquire and do it on your own, than build the ecosystem. But I think the genesis of that is again patient centricity in my mind, and at some point of time, we will have to create these ecosystems to come together. Because my worry with some of these is do we start to create monopolies as well? So I think the intent is right, and I think that's where we need to go. But I'm not sure if that has to be just one single payvider, which sort of does everything. I think that's somewhat scary also.

Venky: So then where is the provider in the mix? What is your sense about it? You know, is the provider catching up? Because most of them tend to be, in general, a little behind in the adoption curve. Obviously, providers are more focused on the clinical experience and clinical delivery of care. So what is their adoption speed, if you will, of technology about this new industry trends in terms of having an integrated One Office, as you call it, to give a unified experience to the consumer? Where are they in that adoption curve? What is your perspective on that?

Saurabh: I think that's a great question. I think the provider community always lags. I think the healthcare industry generally lags the technology adoption, and then within the healthcare industry, the providers lag. And not because they don't understand the importance of it, it's just that most providers are smaller in size. And it's hard for them to make those kind of large investments and big bets. So it's just the nature of the beast. But having said that, I think some of the emerging technologies that are coming in now are becoming increasingly affordable.

For example, take cloud. Now, all providers are struggling with the explosion of data. You have to store your X-rays, mammograms etc for 20 years. I think in the US and in some countries, it's even more than 20 years. And you cannot do that on your hard disks or even on your private cloud. But I think as you see public cloud coming in and most of the public cloud is now HIPAA compliant etc... that sort of lowers the entry barriers. I think if you look at some of the other technology trends like containerization, for example, that again sort of lowers the entry barriers because you can create something in a container, it can be scaled up scaled down, move from here to there etc.

If you look at things like Artificial Intelligence. Now, there are algorithms that are actually available. There's a lot of low-code no-code applications that are coming in, which can help people. You don't need to be a data scientist to use AI anymore, and so on and so forth. If you look at the emergence of open source, for example, if you look at Blockchain and others, a lot of the code is open source. Even companies like IBM now are investing big time in open source. So I think there are a lot of positive technology trends that I think, despite the size disadvantage that providers have, they can actually jumpstart.



Venky: So your point is that adoption should no longer be a challenge from an affordability perspective; it's definitely coming down. From a need perspective, there is more and more need because of the explosion of data, so you simply cannot afford to ignore it. And the third dimension is that technology is now much more open source. So that in terms of adoption, some of these technologies should be pretty straightforward.

Saurabh: I think there are no real barriers. I think the biggest barrier is the mindset. And I've often jokingly called it the 90-9-1 adoption challenge. That is, if you look at any emerging technology, there's only 1% who's really adopting it. The other 9% are hoping that the 1% will do something and then we will follow. And then the rest of the 90% are blissfully ignorant. They're saying "Who cares? We need to continue to do what we are doing. We are in good shape." And that's the mindset shift that I think is a bigger challenge than anything else. And how do you change that mindset? I don't have a silver bullet for that.

Venky: Right. Which brings me to the next question, which is, while that was the paradigm in the past, I think more and more consumers/patients are demanding this even from the providers, right? So there's just no choice to no longer say I don't care. Because, especially with the emergence of millennials becoming mainstream, I think more and more people are also conversing with a lot of these technologies that have become mainstream in our daily lives.

Saurabh: I think that's a fair observation. I think the "why" is pretty clear. I think the patients are demanding, the government is demanding... the whole move towards value-based care is a good example of that. Even if you don't care about your patient, I'm just saying that jokingly, you have to do it from a compliance standpoint, right?

Venky: And with CMS pushing interoperability, you know.

Saurabh: Exactly. So the "why" is there. But I think people do struggle with the "how". How do you get there? Yeah, we know the vision of the promised land, we know it's got to be something about these emerging technologies. But how do you get to that promised land is the struggle, and that's where the mindset shifts I'm talking about comes.

Venky: Fantastic. Thank you so much, Saurabh. Appreciate the insights as always.

Saurabh: Thank you for having me.