VIEW POINT

POST-PANDEMIC CHALLENGES: THE NEW NORMAL AND EVOLVING SCENARIOS IN HEALTHCARE

भारत का प्रधान कौंसुलावास
Consulate General of India
Birmingham, United Kingdom

CII
Confederation of Indian Industry

Infosys®
Navigate your next

Last year this time, world witnessed a major challenge and uncertainty with the outbreak of COVID-19. The virus containment, faster patient recovery and economic health were all dependent on the healthcare sector's response to the pandemic. On the other hand, the pandemic opened the Pandora's box for the healthcare industry, which was already transitioning through tech disruption. The pandemic affected millions of people and the lack of preparedness led to weakening the arsenal of healthcare systems across the world.

Today, with renewed optimism of hopefully what we can soon call the post-COVID era, puts the healthcare system, yet again, in the spotlight. So, if 2020 was a whirlwind, then 2021 is no less than a headscratcher. In the new normal, the healthcare system will be nothing like we have seen before with new models of healthcare delivery and management.

With the focus on post pandemic challenges for the healthcare stakeholders and the evolving scenarios in healthcare, a panel discussion was organized on 18th February 2021 in collaboration with Consulate General of India, Birmingham. We had an esteemed group of panelists from across the healthcare spectrum - Government, Pharma, Hospital Systems, Academia and Industry leaders.

The Challenging Shift Post-Pandemic

The influx of patients, overburdened healthcare facilities and fatigued healthcare staff has put undue pressure on the public healthcare systems. The rising healthcare cost estimated to be about 5-6 percent every year, has made low-cost delivery models imperative. This means, **healthcare providers** must align themselves with infrastructure supporting the transforming healthcare landscape. For instance, the need for centralized intensive care units for the vulnerable/critical population, while home-based low-cost virtual and digital model for non-acute cases. There has also been a big shift towards the need for care delivery for health problems. On the other hand, **payers** have begun looking for cost effective products for organisations and individuals alike with alternate payment models.

The **pharmaceutical industry** went into an overdrive to come up with ways to contain/cure the virus. However, prolonged lockdowns disrupted local as well as global supply chains, leading to pharma companies looking for new processes, leaner supply chains, transparency and newer models of care delivery, especially to the vulnerable communities.

The **Government**, now need to take into account, the safety of their citizens, with every decision they make, be it policies or vaccine rollout. The pandemic derailed clinical trials, with researchers and organizations looking at ways to efficiently conduct virtual trials.

Researchers and academicians are also exploring newer ways to continue with cutting-edge research, taking forward the shared approach that was seen during the pandemic. At the helm of all of this, is the informed **consumer,** who is now willing to play a larger role in treatment processes as well as lifestyle improvement.

Future-proofing the Healthcare System

Reset the Mindset

Change is the only constant. We must begin looking at changes that ensure better outcomes while lowering cost and delivering excellent care even beyond the pandemic. Building infrastructure that isn't just ready to combat COVID-19, but serve as a solid foundation to stand up against/avoid health emergencies in future. It is also essential for people to be willing to adapt. For instance, it took a pandemic for us the realize how critical remote care or telehealth can be, something that has been talked about for a long time now. The pandemic has given it the must-needed thrust, but now is the time to take it a step further and deliver truly digital care.

Virtual Care

During COVID-19, healthcare providers witnessed 50-175 times increase in the number of virtual visits. Despite this, there has been a wide gap between the interest shown and the actual usage of telehealth. It's time to make the most of this opportunity by building low-cost home-based care delivery models for patients requiring 24x7 care via remote monitoring. Improved reimbursement rates via payers, higher adoption in health plans, and incentivizing the use of virtual care can fuel it further.

Personalized Medicine

Innovation can bring efficiency in healthcare outcomes. For instance, wearable tech integrated with mainstream medical devices helps in effortless monitoring the patient's vitals. The holistic patient data combined with next-gen technologies like AI can enable care delivery model specific to that person.

Research & Development/Virtual Clinical Trials

Research plays a key role across the healthcare value chain. And, the COVID-19 saw the global scientific community work together with a shared vision, like never before. There was transparency in research and protocols. This has also ensured quick vaccine rollout, supported by the fast-tracked regulatory processes.

Another aspect has been virtual clinical trials, which cut short the time taken for trials traditionally. It also ensures diversity of participants, which would be a great benefit to researchers and pharma companies. Moving ahead, platforms can be built to make researcher and scientists across the globe collaborate, and also enable hassle-free participation during trials with accurate and real-time information.

Transparent Global Supply Chains

The global supply chain took a beating during the pandemic. It also put forth the need for a more transparent approach, with complete visibility across the value chain. Advanced analytics and automation can further help combat increasing regulatory requirements, inaccurate data reporting and poor product standardization.

Population Health Management

A comprehensive patient profile can be created to help with data standardization, patient registers, and interoperability. Deploying data analytics to the voluminous data involved, regulators must also push for secure, integrated systems for exchange of information.

Breaking the Silos

The future is about providing quality healthcare for all, without any inequalities. This cannot be achieved in silos! All stakeholders of the healthcare industry – healthcare providers, communities, payer partners, academia, technology providers, government and consumers – must work together to navigate the new normal.

Likewise, breaking the data silos can pave way for interoperability. For instance, the academia-pharma together have made it possible to roll out vaccines at a speed never seen before. India, known as the pharmacy of the world, has supplied medicines to over 150 countries, while itself reeling from the pandemic. Together, we can draw from each other's strengths to help make the shift from patient-centric to people-centric outcomes. But, stripping these organizational barriers will need a strong digital backbone.

Building a Digital Front Door for Navigating the New Normal

The future of healthcare is data-driven! This makes it imperative to build solutions that unite all stakeholders through digital platforms. These platforms can harness big data and analytics tools, leveraging ePRO solutions for effective collaboration with patients and clinical trials. Similarly, also serve as a foundation for low-cost virtual care models. Digital technologies can also be harnessed by healthcare providers, payers and other stakeholders to build customer-focused products with real-time interventions. This will require designing technological innovations into our lives.

Technology at the Core

The advent of next-gen technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), natural language processing (NLP), 3D printing, etc. can be the key enablers in identifying opportunities and unlocking sustainable innovation. We are already seeing a spike in cloud adoption, which has been increasing exponentially, projected at 11.8% growth by 2026. With clinically integrated networks, data on cloud can ensure better care systems and thereby patient outcomes. Not just clinical applications, the adoption of cloud is also seen in non-clinical applications like finance management. On the other hand, AI derives insights from the voluminous data to build predictive models with real-time interventions. From resource utilization and predicting readmissions to increasing staff productivity and enhancing process efficiency, AI can play a key role across care and wellbeing.

In a nutshell, the future is data-driven! To navigate the new normal, change-makers, leaders must recalibrate their priorities to build an agile, reliable and scalable healthcare ecosystem.

About the authors

Moderator

Lakshmi Kaul
Head and Representative, UK Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

Panelists

Roshan Shetty
Head of Life Sciences, Insurance & Healthcare for EMEA, Infosys

Dr. Shashank Vikram
Consul General of India, Birmingham

Karamjit Singh CBE
Chairman, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

David Champeaux
Chief Growth Officer, Cherish Health

Prof KK Cheng
Director of the Institute of Applied Health Research at the University of Birmingham

Dr. Kapil Yadav
Professor in the Centre for Community Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi

For more information, contact askus@infosys.com

Infosys®
Navigate your next