



Dr K V Krishnan (India) - Empowering Healthcare with IT part I

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This opening post gives an overview of the situation in India and how IT could be used to improve the situation. Part 2 will cover specific challenges and hospital initiatives.

Indian Health Scenario



Presently, the reach of healthcare services is very low in India due to several factors. The healthcare sector is witnessing mounting requirements due to an ever increasing population. According to a recent survey, only 0.7 hospital beds are presently available per 1000 persons. In addition, the acute shortage of doctors results in poor doctor patient ratio. It is estimated that an infrastructure spend of US\$ 30 billion would be required in the next 10 years to match the developed countries. Furthermore, delivery mechanisms are currently plagued with process inefficiencies and disconnected work flows. Significant benefits can be achieved by streamlining activities, redesigning work flows and institutionalizing processes across hospitals. Information Technology can increase the ability of physicians and clinical technicians to access and use the correct information about the patients which would ultimately improve the quality and efficiency of healthcare.

IT and Healthcare

Information Technology has created visible impact in every industrial segment of human society. Now, IT is progressing towards revolutionizing the Indian Healthcare scenario. India

has the right mix of IT professionals and highly skilled medical fraternity. Private healthcare is also emerging as a key player in the healthcare spending in India. As per recent statistics, the current healthcare spending in private sector is around Rs.925 billion whereas the government spending is only around Rs.170 billion. After nearly a decade, the IT component of the Indian Healthcare industry is greatly improving. However, the entry of IT into Indian healthcare has been slow and disorganized. The Indian healthcare industry spends only 2% of its revenues whereas the average of other information intensive industries is 10%.

The potential of Information Technology needs to be increasingly leveraged for delivering healthcare that is accessible and affordable. The next ten years are bound to shape the future of healthcare in India with innovations in technology, financing and delivery models. Advances in technology and medical research will make it possible to visualize a completely new health care system that provides more personalized care without essentially increasing costs.

Government Initiatives

Internet has made healthcare more accessible, interactive, and highly useful. Telemedicine, picture archiving and communication systems (PACS), and healthcare information systems (HIS) are a few of the many IT applications in healthcare.

Central government and several state governments in India have accepted Telemedicine as a means to provide healthcare. Recent government initiatives have resulted in the formation of Telemedicine Society of India, the Medical Informatics Society of India. The Government of India has also launched the Health Management Information System (HMIS) portal to convert local health data into real time useful information, management indicators and trends which can be displayed graphically in reports.

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