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## HEALTH CARE SECTOR – A CRITICAL REVIEW: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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### ABSTRACT

*Health care sector is a segment within the economic system that provides goods and services to treat patients with curative, preventive, rehabilitative and palliative care. It is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in the world. Health care sector of India constitutes government sector that is financed publicly providing promotive and preventive health services throughout the country from primary to territory level and the private sector providing curative care by levying fee. Health care sector can be expected that the numbers will increase with increased internet penetration and Smartphone usage. This paper provides a critical review of health care sector with reference to problems and prospects and also discusses the significance of the study, recent trends, problems, suggestions and conclusion.*

### KEYWORDS

health care, hospitals, patient, pharmacy, doctors.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Health care has been a focus area for the Indian government. The public healthcare system in India remains highly overstretched and the private healthcare system is yet to achieve the desired level penetration. Mobile apps, dealing in the healthcare sector, have ushered in some welcome changes in the Indian healthcare system though their penetration remains quite low as compared to the volume of healthcare services seekers in India. However, it can be expected that the numbers will increase with increased internet penetration and Smartphone usage.

According to data from the Indian Medical Association (IMA), India's healthcare spending remains low at 1.2% when compared with the US's 17% and China's 5.5%. This data clearly indicates that India has a low spread of medical stores.

### 2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The healthcare sector is a service industry, where the patient (customer) is the most important person. Therefore, greater importance has to be given to the people element and that all the employees of the hospital have to perform their duties in a better way to provide satisfaction to the customers. It is not only important how advanced technology and drugs a hospital use to cure the patient, but also it is very important that how each employee of the hospitals deal with the patient and their relatives (i.e. customer). Every organization faces the problem of directing the energies of their staff to the task of achieving business goals and objectives. Higher the availability of latest machineries, technologies, procedures and systems are important; but what is more critical is the quality of delivery the individual who work in these hospitals. The dependency on human assists has been observed more in the healthcare sector, especially in the case of hospitals.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this paper is to critically review the healthcare sector in India, and illuminate the key challenges to the overall attainment of better health status for Indians. Such an analysis timely because health care restructuring is high on the Indian political agenda and policy options are being continuously debated. This critical health sector can be expected that the numbers will increase with increased internet penetration and smart phone usage.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive research, in which Secondary data was used for conducting the study and the same is collected from journal and magazines.

### 5. RECENT TRENDS

Online healthcare mobile apps can be broadly classified under few categories including telemedicine, online pharmacy, personal healthcare, healthcare at home, fitness and wellness related apps and pediatric solutions providers. These mobile apps are using Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and other modern technologies to provide affordable and quality healthcare.

#### 5.1 Telemedicine

Telemedicine apps help patients to get doctor consultations through the apps or by web-based videos and chats. A McKinsey report informs that India can save up to \$10 billion in 2025, by using telemedicine instead of in-person doctor consultations. Major players in this segment in India are Practo, mfine, Lybrat and Docsapp. With over 1,00,000 doctors supporting its operations in India. Practo caters to about 25 million patients every year.

#### 5.2 Online Pharmacy

It is also known as e-pharmacy, this segment has players like 1MG, pharomeasy, Netmeds and MyraMed. Alongwith growing investor interest, e-pharmacy companies have also overcome legal challenges thrown at them from offline competitors. The Central Government has introduced a draft regulation guideline for the e-pharmacy segment to standardize registration procedures. The move may provide encouragement to players in the segment.

#### 5.3 Personal health and check-ups

Increasing awareness about healthcare issues has led to the rise of healthcare apps like Portea, Practo, Murgency, MyUpchar and Curejoy. There are also healthcare apps like Pregbuddy and Maya, aimed exclusively at pregnancy advice.

**5.4 Healthcare at home**

An India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) report has predicted that the market of healthcare at home will reach \$6.21 billion by next year. Additionally, India has the second largest geriatric or aged population in the world and that increases the scope of this segment. Busy urban lifestyles have also contributed to the rise of various lifestyle oriented diseases. The scope for apps in this segment is expansive. This sector includes simple diagnostic tests, advanced oncology or cancer support and various other services which can be well facilitated by apps. Companies operating in this sector are Healthiness, Call Health, Practo and Portea.

**5.5 Fitness and Wellness**

With increasing fitness consciousness, India has seen a rise of fitness and nutrition service companies like Fitternity, Cure. Fit, HealthifyMe, GoQii and HealthKart. There are also many mental Health and wellness companies like Yourdost and InnerHour.

**5.6 Pediatrics Care**

A Bengaluru-based company, Address Health is providing affordable primary pediatric healthcare services to school going children. They treat children for hearing, optical issues and dental health and anthropometry issues. Address Health has designed curriculum for both healthy mental and physical behavior of children.

**6. HEALTHCARE APP**

There is a growing scope for various health apps that can enable users to book and avail medicines and medical services. Many of these apps are also looking into emergency medical services whereas others are focusing exclusively on medical equipment. Yet, many others are allowing users to book appointments with doctors in an easy and hassle-free manner. Many healthcare professionals have also welcomed the services provided by these apps which are aimed at using technology for quick treatment.

The Indian healthcare sector will become one of the top revenue contributors and is estimated to reach \$58.8 billion in 2020 from \$25.39 in 2017, creating a huge opportunity for healthcare based online or offline businesses. A report by Research 2 Guidance, a global think tank, shows that there are 3,25,000 healthcare apps available worldwide. However, the report also states that the number of such apps in India is relatively less but another report from Accenture states that download of healthcare apps have doubled in the past couple of years, indicating towards a positive swing in the segment.

**7. PROBLEMS OF HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN INDIA**

After Independence there has been a significant improvement, in the health status of people. But the situation is not much better as per study of World Health Organization (WHO). It has placed India in 112<sup>th</sup> position among 191 countries of the world.

**7.1 Neglect of Rural Population**

A serious drawback of India's health service is the neglect of rural masses. It is largely a service based on urban hospitals. Although, there are large number of Primary Health Centre (PHC's) and rural hospitals yet the urban bias is visible. According to health information 31.5% of hospitals and 16% hospital beds are situated in rural areas where 75% of total population resides. Moreover, the doctors are unwilling to serve in rural areas.

**7.2 Emphasis on Culture Method**

The health system of India depends almost on imported western models. It has no roots in the culture and tradition of the people. It is mostly service based on urban hospitals. This has been at the cost of providing comprehensive primary health care to all. Otherwise speaking, it has completely neglected preventive, promotive, rehabilitative and public health measures.

**7.3 Inadequate Outlay for Health**

According to the National Health Policy 2002, the Government contribution to health sector constitutes only 0.9 per cent of the GDP. This is quite insufficient. In India, public expenditure on health is 17.3% of the total health expenditure while in China, the same is 24.9% and in Sri Lanka and USA, the same is 45.4 and 44.1 respectively. This is the main cause of low health standards in the country.

**7.4 Social Inequality**

The growth of health facilities has been highly imbalanced in India, Rural; hilly and remote areas of the country are under served while in urban areas and cities, health facility is well developed. The SC/ST and the poor people are far away from modern health service.

The table shows social inequality in provision of health in India.

**TABLE 1: INDICATORS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY**

Sl. No	Indicator	All India	SC	ST	Other Disadvantaged	Others
1	Infant Mortality Rate (per '000 population)	70	83	84.2	76	61.8
2	Under 5 Mortality Rate (per '000 population)	94.9	119.3	126.6	103.1	82.6
3	% Children under weight	47	53.5	55.9	47.3	41.1

**7.5 Shortage of Medical Personnel**

In India, shortage of medical personnel like doctors, a nurse, etc. is a basic problem in the health sector. In 1999-2000, while there were only 5.5 doctors per 10,000 population in India, the same is 25 in the USA and 20 in China. Similarly, the number of hospitals and dispensaries is insufficient in comparison to our vast population.

**7.6 Medical Research**

Medical research in the country needs to be focused on drugs and vaccines for tropical diseases which are normally neglected by International Pharmaceutical companies on account of their limited profitability potential. The National Health Policy 2002 suggests allocating more funds to boost medical research in this direction.

**7.7 Expensive Health Service**

In India, health services especially allopathic are quite expensive. It hits hard the common man. Prices of various essential drugs have gone up. Therefore, more emphasis should be given to the alternative systems of medicine. Ayurveda, Unani and Homeopathy systems are less costly and will serve the common man in better way.

**8. SUGGESTIONS**

- Education of physicians and nurses in public sector
- Incentives and policies to attract and retain personnel
- Make it mandatory for professionals to do three years of rural service
- Formation of an integrated national/state public health system
- Improve physical access to preventive and curative health services especially in India's rural population
- Efficient allocation of resources between different levels of services and between different geographical areas
- Sustained programs to change household behaviors and spread awareness
- Creation of centers of excellence for health + nutrition policy research

**9. CONCLUSION**

The country has become one of the leading organizations for high-end diagnostic services with tremendous capital investment for advanced diagnostic facilities, thus catering to a greater proportion of the population. Besides, Indian medical service consumers have become more conscious towards their healthcare up keep which demanded to maintain quality in the healthcare industry. The people often compare facilities and technologies available in the public sector institutions

with those available in the private sector with the obvious aftermath of adding to the dissatisfaction of the beneficiaries. So, a comprehensible policy must be taken to satisfy the increased expectation of the people. All levels of health sectors must be maintained and provided with better infrastructure, adequate staff, equipment, drinking water, sanitation, drainage, environmental cleanliness, proper waste disposal management, rational and cost effective treatment and reduction of morbidity (both chronic and communicable) steps must be undertaken for ensuring the availability of doctors, paramedical staff, utilization of equipment and its reliability in all hospitals by the government and public authorities.

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