



Knowledge Management for Indian Health care sector

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ABSTRACT

The conceptual paper begins with the description of current position of Indian Health care sector goes on to compare health expenditure in various countries; defines knowledge management with the perspective of health care consumerism and concludes with the development of a framework on knowledge management strategy for the Health care sector.

KEYWORDS

Health care, Knowledge Management, Strategy, Health care Consumerism.

Introduction

Indian economy is growing and by most analysts, considered a success story for the sustainable growth pattern that is shown in the past and predicted for future. It is a known fact that the focal points of the growth are the number of townships that have developed over the last few decades and are still increasing. Even when a large proportion of population resides in the rural areas, it is the urban population that has revolutionised the growth pattern and achieved the greater success in improving our GDP.

This growth and speedy urbanization is bringing with it health transition by the way of shift in demographics, socio-economic changes, the changed disease pattern with increase in degenerative and life style diseases and reduction in communicable diseases. Though the economy is growing, our health indices are far behind those of developed countries. If we compare the Healthcare expenditure of some of the developed and developing countries (figure 1) below, we can see that India has the least public expenditure on health and also the total expenditure of about 5% of GDP is way below any of the developed countries.

this sector that was estimated to be at US \$ 78.6 billion in 2012 in terms of revenue is estimated to maintain CAGR of 15.1% from FY 2008 – 2017, by 2017 is expected to be US \$160 billion and US \$280 billion by 2020. (IBEF, 2014)

Some of the growth drivers for the sector are the rising Indian population, advancement in disease control that has improved life expectancy, reduced infant mortality rate, improved access to medicines and other healthcare facilities and the purchasing power of the Indian middle class. Along with this the growth of healthcare tourism has opened the whole world as a common marketplace to purchase the desired services at the minimal cost.

With more than 1.21 billion people (Census 2011) and an estimated 76million people to be of the age 65+ by 2020, India needs to develop its healthcare system to an extent to be able to serve not only the needs of increasing population in general, growing geriatric population but also the expected influx of tourist arriving for the purpose of healthcare. Though India has been to an extent able to control the communicable diseases, yet the increasing life style or non-communicable diseases are on the exponential increase and still to be managed.

Need for Health care Knowledge Management

On one hand the understanding of various types of diseases, how to manage healthcare and the technical know - how is increasing at a rapid pace across the globe, on the other, this understanding is limited to only those few who are experiencing it live. This experiential learning is not collected, stored, distributed and/or applied in the manner that will help both the providers of healthcare and the users of this service. This new knowledge that is being generated has a potential to revolutionize the health care services both at the point of application as well as at the point of decision making. Even when the health care professionals is aware of and want to assess this knowledge, the availability is not there, since where the efforts of storage has been made it is at dispersed platforms and not at a single window which makes it practically difficult to get hold of at the time of criticality. The decision is therefore made without the experiential knowledge that could have helped in making the "best decision". The absence of this knowledge on one side prevents the patients from getting the best care on the other brings in the sense of not being able to do their best in the healthcare providers.

Health care Consumerism

Today's society is consumers' society and it has had its impact on the healthcare sector too. The change in the attitude of patients and the readily available technology has led to the emerging concept of 'Healthcare consumerism'. With this

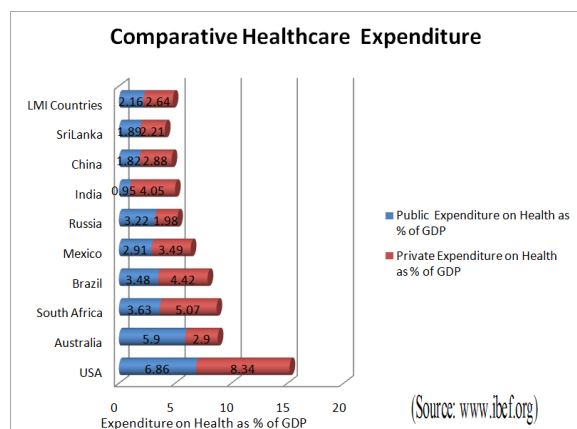


Figure 1 Comparative Expenditure on Healthcare

With the increased attention being paid to the health care industry all over the world sustainable healthcare in India too has become a crucial area of interest. Health care industry comprising of hospitals, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment supplies, medical insurance and diagnostics, is one of the fastest growing verticals in India both from the perspective of revenue as well as the employment generated by the sector. As per IBEF website

there is an urgent need for the healthcare professionals and the healthcare providers to pay increased attention towards the needs and wants of patients and also there is a greater need to improve the processes. Only then the healthcare sector will be able to sustain the competitive environment provided by healthcare consumerism.

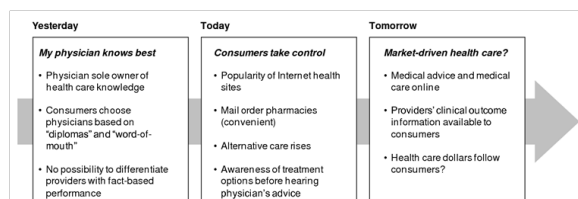


Figure 2. Rise of Healthcare Consumerism Health care services and processes driving the need for Knowledge Management

With the increase in Health care Consumerism and changing expectations of consumers (as seen in Fig. 2). There is an urgent need to introduce and shift the focus of managing both consumer related health care and process related health care to be driven by Knowledge Management. Some of the factors driving this need are depicted in fig. 3 below.

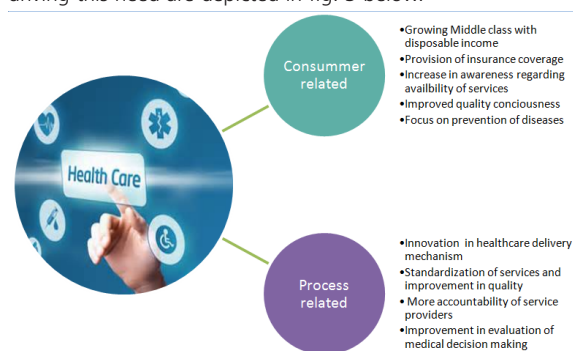


Figure 3. Factors driving Healthcare Knowledge management Many social scientists and Business analysts have given a variety of definitions of Knowledge management but there has been no consensus as to the absolute definition. A most commonly accepted one covering almost all the components may define Knowledge management as the systematic process of creating, gathering, storing and dissemination of knowledge for the purpose of improving the productivity in an organization. In the same parlance, we can also define the Healthcare Knowledge management as the systematic creation, sharing, standardizing and translation of healthcare knowledge for the purpose of improving the quality of patient care.

The basic goal of Healthcare Knowledge management being to be able to provide optimum, timely and effective healthcare knowledge to the healthcare professionals at the point of usage so that they can make high quality, pragmatic decisions with respect to patient care. If the focus is on only this aspect, the healthcare knowledge management can fulfil the gaps that are right now being experienced by the healthcare professionals and the providers in terms of the strategies and ways to organize and process this knowledge and also the operational issue of making this available for implementation.

Health care knowledge as strategy

When the provision of health care is considered from the point of view of an organization or from the perspective of training, the use of 'shadowing' or joint-problem solving may be considered as two of the best practices for transfer of tacit knowledge. Knowledge management experts Dorothy Leonard and Walter Swap, prefer the joint problem solving approach by the expert and the novice to the shadowing which they consider as passive approach, since the novice is observer and expert, the executor (Lobach D, 2012). In the joint problem solving, the novice and expert work together on the project, novice gets to have the expert's insights while actually working on the project. Whereas, if we consider this from the

broader point of view of health care industry, this exchange or the insights gained from it, needs to be made available to the health care providers on a platform that they can access when required at the point of delivery. This will make it possible for them to take right decision based upon evidence and expert advice rather than working in ambiguity.

The Framework of knowledge management for Health care (fig 4.) provides methods and tools for

- Acquisition - capturing of existing specialised knowledge; providing guidelines for creation of new knowledge base
- Storage - standardising documentation and procedures; indexing the document with the source of information and the scenarios of best results; making the information easily accessible to all authorised users
- Disseminate knowledge using digital platform and web technology – publishing relevant information through social networking sites; utilizing peer collaboration; work group and communities of experts
- Usage- optimizing the services to the patients so that the patients have access to the best quality at an optimum cost; ensuring the availability of quality information to the health care delivery experts for planning the patient care; at the time of Clinical assessment decision making at the point of delivery as well as during the monitoring of patient health.
- Transformation – the knowledge thus captured, stored and used can be further recaptured with new researches; analysis of better quality; update on the existing knowledge base and better policy formation that can be used for transforming the health care sector benefitting the patients, the service providers, the hospitals, and ultimately the society.

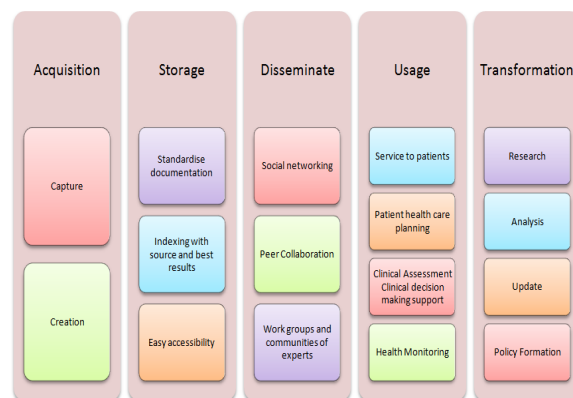


Figure 4. Framework of knowledge management for Health care

An effective KM program when implemented in Health care will bring one or more of the following:

- Foster innovation by encouraging the free flow of ideas and its expression.
- Improve collaborative by integrating ideas from the experts
- Become more transparent by providing a platform to access knowledge
- Be increasingly proactive by being able to avail the knowledge at the point of delivery and decision making
- Improve customer service by streamlining processes and reducing the response time.
- Streamline operations and reduce costs by eliminating redundant or unnecessary processes
- Reduction in human errors.
- Improve accountability to public.

Conclusion

Health care Knowledge management therefore needs an undivided attention of all the participants who can contribute in

developing this data base of knowledge along with the whole hearted efforts of the agencies that can provide the platform for storage, access and sharing. The development of policies to access and use this knowledge at the time required and the dissemination of information to utilize the resources available should also be a priority issue. Only when this is implemented, can the Health care sector fully make use of the Knowledge management and be able to sustain and satisfy the ever increasing inflow of patients who are becoming more aware and conscious of their rights, by the day. This is also an immediate, viable solution for being quality conscious and cost effective in providing health care on demand.

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