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"We will see increasing confidence of doctors in telehealth services"

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Dr. Amit K. Jotwani, Co-founder & Chief Medical Officer, Onco.com, Bengaluru talks about the ongoing COVID-19 situation



How is the company responding to the fight against COVID-19?

At Onco.com, we are working very closely with our oncologists and hospital partners to ensure continuity of care towards cancer patients, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. We introduced a teleconsultation service in March, called*Call Onco*, to help cancer patients and caregivers get advice from oncologists through a telephonic call or video conferencing. Patients and caregivers can get answers from top oncologists, for queries ranging from their current treatment status, diagnosis, and precautions against COVID-19. The duration of teleconsultation is up to 20 minutes and is scheduled within 24 hours of receiving a request during which we collect all the relevant medical information of the patient to be shared with the doctors before having the call. This helps doctors better understand the case before they answer the patient's queries. In addition, every cancer patient at Onco.com is assigned a designated care manager who engages with them throughout their treatment journey and helps them navigate through all the needs and concerns regarding their treatment. For patients who are looking for detailed treatment advice, Onco.com also offers a premium online opinion service called Onco Tumour Board, where patients and their caregivers can get detailed treatment advice in the form of an online report from a multi-disciplinary panel of senior oncologists. Every patient who opts for the tumor board service gets a complimentary Call Onco service as well and they can schedule the call after their report is shared.

We are also helping patients with connecting to operating hospitals, amidst the lockdown. This has been of massive help for patients since there were a lot of restrictions on transport services and finding a functional cancer hospital has been a challenge for patients. Since we work closely with hospitals and PoCs, we get real-time information on availability/operations and could connect patients for teleconsultation with the operating doctor, get them to move across locations to reach the location

A year back we kickstarted our community initiative, Talk Your Heart Out, which has served as a support circle for cancer patients and caregivers to come out and share their stories while seeking practical advice. Even amidst the lockdown, we have been able to conduct this online and the response has been phenomenal. Onco.com also offers a peer-to-peer support service called, Onco Warrior, connecting patients with survivors to help guide them through the journey, both mentally and emotionally.

What will be the new healthcare trends post COVID-19?

Healthcare sector would see a paradigm shift in several ways the patients are served for their healthcare needs. The biggest change has been the promulgation of telemedicine regulations by the Medical Council of India, which has drastically increased its adoption by patients as well as doctors. The present situation created an urgent need for telehealth services and

the introduction of newer technologies and services by digital health companies in collaboration with medical fraternity has come as a huge savior for people in need of medical help. This trend would continue and we would see a continuation of telehealth services especially for patients under follow up care or those with chronic conditions where teleconsultations with specialists would become a norm.

We will see increasing confidence of doctors in telehealth services as they would be able to serve more patients through teleconsultations and save time to focus on treating active patients who need their attention in hospitals. We will also see increasing adoption of home healthcare services that would start incorporating more and more procedures that could be done at home thus reducing the burden on hospitals.

Social distancing norms would bring a structured approach in out-patient appointment bookings for hospitals and doctors clinics and this would help improve technology in out-patient care management as regular patient records would be stored in apps that would come handy for doctors to review and make better clinical decisions for the patient. We will eventually see paperless clinics where every paramedical service like lab or imaging tests and medicine delivery services would get seamlessly linked. As technology adoption evolves among patients, we will see aggregators emerge in the scene where patients would be able to choose the best quality lab with the best prices and best services thus delivering the benefits to the end-user.

Dr. Amit K. Jotwani, Co-founder & Chief Medical Officer, Onco.com, Bengaluru