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"There is a need of SOPs to be in place for large scale mobilization of existing health resources"

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Manish Sacheti, CFO, Ziqitza Healthcare, Mumbai talks about the ongoing situation of COVID-19



How is Ziqitza Healthcare contributing to this fight against COVID-19?

The spread of pandemic in India had the potential to be explosive due to high density of the population in both urban and rural. When the lockdown was announced due to COVID 19 the first step that an EMS played was to manage lacs of calls on emergency helpline related to COVID.

Ziqitza call centre employees also assist caller inquiries on COVID-19, we currently are receiving over 2 lacs calls a month related to COVID-19 with 110 capacity call centres of 104 Helpline in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. The emergency helpline call inflow has increased by 10x overnight. To manage this, we had to scale up our call centre capacity, ensuring workplace safety keeping social distancing protocols.

The other key role played by ZHL came was immediate movement of suspected COVID patients in Advanced Life Ambulances across Punjab , Madhya Pradesh and Jharkand . We have transferred over 6000 patients with utmost care to the designated hospitals. Initial transfers were done when even PPE kit were not available. Our Emergency Medical Technicians - EMTs- is the first unit that comes in direct contact with the suspect or confirmed COVID-19 case. To avoid any chances of cross infection we follow strict processes in sanitization of ambulances and equipment's. We were also an enabler for handling migrant patients, transferring and managing beggars or destitute community during such times.

In lockdown the manufacturing sector or essential corporate sectors had to continue working for serving the 1.2 billion population of the country. The challenge for these companies was to ensure the safety at workplace to ensure continuity of services. To solve this dilemma ZHL came up with an innovative solution of providing trained paramedics / Doctors and fully equipped ambulances on site. We went a step ahead and also provided the employees a network of over 1000 doctors on tele call facility to get timely medical assistance 24x7.

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

Currently, the entire world is dealing with a pandemic that has changed the face of healthcare services. When the entire world was dealing with a COVID-19 crisis, other health and wellness issues were overlooked, leading to the rise in need of telemedicine and telehealth services. According to a report by Global Market Insights, the telemedicine market is set to be valued at $175.5B by 2026. These numbers certainly indicate the need for telehealth now and in the future.

Coronavirus being a respiratory disease that can be transmitted through droplets has increased the cost of quality healthcare services by bringing in additional safety measures, reliance on indigenous production of medical equipment, additional qualified and trained manpower. This pandemic will also lead to a major shift from traditional healthcare services to focus on technology-based solutions, the use of robotics in healthcare and increased focus towards home care. The government expenditure on the healthcare infrastructure will increase drastically and emphasis would be on increasing bed capacity across the country, increased demand for healthcare providers and investment into medical research and medicines.

The major change we see would be in Corporate sector where we see the focus will move to provide medical/workplace value adds to its employees apart from salary and park. They will invest in onsite paramedics/ ambulances and telehealth facilities to provide an immediate medical assistance.

How can India be more prepared for future pandemics?

The current pandemic is a great learning experience for everyone. The following points are restricted only to health care measures.

- There is a need of SOPs to be in place for large scale mobilization of existing health resources in terms of manpower, medical equipment, medicines, and use of consumables.
- One major thing COVID-19 has taught us is the need and importance of PPEs. Emergency stock of PPEs that can be augmented by increased production at short notice should be available. There should also be adequate emergency medicine stock which can be amplified by increased production in a short span.
- Continued awareness campaigns should be conducted on the need for health hygiene, food hygiene practices for a healthier lifestyle.
- Strong deterrent for violators of public health and safety regulations
- Dedicated indoor admission facilities that can be made operational at short notice

- Periodic mock drills for activation, evaluation, and up-gradation of emergency medical response systems is the current need of the hour
- It is important to enhance the immunization coverage for all children in India
- Provision for safe drinking water to every citizen is a vital responsibility and shouldn’t be neglected to avoid any infection/diseases