



There is an urgent need to elevate the patient awareness levels regarding diseases

28 December 2020 | Views

The healthcare infrastructure needs drastic improvement to meet any unexpected circumstances.



The importance of strong supply chains in healthcare has become a top focus area. There needs to be increased investment towards technology and innovation along with a shift from reactive to proactive care. In addition to this, the Indian consumer is still ill-informed. There is an urgent need to elevate the awareness levels regarding diseases, their symptoms, possible diagnostic tests available and treatment options. BioSpectrum reaches out to leading healthcare players for their plans in 2021.

“Building multinational network”

NephroPlus has recently acquired majority stake in Royal Care Dialysis Centers, Inc (RCDC) the Philippines. We are excited to add the team from RCDC to our network. Working together with this leadership team of RCDC, we are now aiming to become the largest dialysis network in the Philippines in next 5 years. We have already started talking to several dialysis centers in the Philippines to fuel our expansion plans. With this entry into the Philippines, we reiterate our commitment to build a dominant multinational network across Asia, Middle East and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) geographies.

Vikram Vuppala, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, NephroPlus, Hyderabad

“Adding more stores & retail outlets”

With the new round of funding by the Allana Group and Adar Poonawalla, we plan to strengthen our private labels that have gained popularity over the years. We will continue to add more retail stores and reach out to our customers not just through brick and mortar outlets but also through online channels. From being a mere startup a decade ago, to clocking revenues of over Rs 1,000 crore for the current fiscal year, Wellness Forever has swiftly expanded its footprint to over 200 stores in Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka. The company aims to add over 150 more stores in the next year and 1000 retail outlets in the next three years.

Gulshan Bakhtiani, Founder & Director, Wellness Forever Medicare, Mumbai

“Restructuring business development team”

We are aiming to deliver sustainable growth in 2021. This will entail restructuring and reconfiguring of the sales and marketing departments to make them more focused and productive. We are also aligning two separate field sales teams with national footprint – focused on hospitals/medical clients & on franchisee collection centres named as Thyrocare Service Providers. Restructuring the office based business development teams will ensure focus by priority channels. In 2021 we will also see COVID facility in National Capital Region (NCR) apart from Mumbai and will also have future plans in Bangalore and Kolkata to have presence in all regions. More processing facilities – Regional Processing Laboratories coming up basis careful planning of market demand, turnaround time (TAT) requirement and workload balancing. In 2021 we will also direct our efforts to focus on quality across our channel, beyond lab, renewed focus on communication, audit and training. With more focus on training of staff for better competence and efficiency, which will also help in upgrading the overall customer Service experience.

Arindam Halder, Chief Executive Officer, Thyrocare Technologies, Mumbai

“Planning to open facilities in few African & West Asian countries”

Our main focus will continue to be strengthening our centers of excellence in the fields of pathogen identification, proteomics, genomics, metabolomics, digital pathology and personalized medicine. Presently, we are operating in India, United Arab Emirates, United States and South Africa. In India, we are looking to expand rapidly in the North and Western parts of the country with sizeable number of touch points. Also, by next financial year, we have plans to open diagnostics facilities in Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ghana by next financial year. In West Asia, we are looking to set up lab in Kuwait and a new facility in Abu Dhabi. To cater to the patient's new age demands, we plan to introduce IT infrastructure. The next year is dedicated to the people of Neuberger. Continuous learning and development programmes, reward and recognition programmes, etc. will be at the core of Neuberger's mission this year. We want to strengthen our digital interaction platform and encourage people to start a conversation around various ailments and get expert advice from the doctors. Another campaign we will be promoting is the virtual “DOST (Diagnosticians Overseeing Specialized Treatment)”. Through this programme, we plan to raise awareness about the role of a diagnostician in chronic diseases management.

Aishwarya Vasudevan, Group Chief Operating Officer, Neuberger Diagnostics, Mumbai

“Strengthening our technology platforms”

During this pandemic technology has provided us major support in all areas of work. Whether it is to connect with patients remotely during lockdown or managing in-patient beds, ventilators in acute care or helping us bring out studies, articles, case reports at lightning speed technology was indeed acted like a backbone. It helped us learn from each other and help patients across the globe. Getting back to normal life will be a major focus in 2021. Getting our staff vaccinated will be our top priority. We will further work on strengthening our technology platforms and our systems and processes so that we are more prepared than before to handle any such challenges that future holds in store for us.

Dr Chandrika Kambam, Director, HCG Cancer Hospital, Bengaluru

“Strengthening the IT infrastructure”

We aim to coordinate with government agencies to administer the COVID-19 vaccine, giving priority to healthcare workers, the armed forces personnel, and the vulnerable population of our community. Despite the ongoing vaccination, we will try to ensure no slippages in safeguards to prevent the retransmission of COVID-19. We will also continue maintaining oversight on the supply chain, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) count, etc.; and be prepared for any possible eventuality of a new wave of COVID-19. Going forward we need to focus more on non-COVID-related medical procedures. We are also gearing up for the rebound in patient volumes once the flight connectivity resume with regard to medical value travel. With an aim to outreach and enlarge the integrated healthcare model, we are strengthening the IT infrastructure with a focus on homecare, teleconsultation, diagnostic services etc.

Dr Harish Pillai, Chief Executive Officer, Aster India, Aster DM Healthcare, Bengaluru

“Making presence more robust using teletherapy”

Undoubtedly, this pandemic has made people more aware and cautious about the mental health issues in all age groups. During the lockdown period, we reached out to 50,000 underprivileged families and provided uninterrupted and seamless support to their children with special needs. As we enter the year 2021, we strongly hope to resume our business as usual. We are also expecting that the vaccine would stabilize the COVID-19 situation. We will look forward to vaccinating our employees especially the frontline workers and further plan to open all our 100 centres across India with utmost care and precautions. Since we have successfully delivered our online training programmes during this pandemic, we also aim to make our presence more robust across India using teletherapy. We aim to expand the number of integrated centres from 100+ to at least 300+ while working alongside inclusive schools.

Nitin Bindlish, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Mom's Belief, New Delhi

“Bringing transformation with digital pathology”

The ongoing crisis has reinstated the fact that the healthcare and diagnostics sector can reap out great profits for a country like India. Our country can very well be turned into the ‘Laboratory of the World’ with the government joining hands with the private sector. The area where we would bring in one of the biggest transformation in diagnostics space will be digital pathology. In the post COVID scenario we would like to explore possibilities where some of our pathologists, oncologists, and radiologists could work from home. This is where digital pathology would play a vital role. Our work with Microsoft will also pave way to this transformation. SRL has recently launched the second phase of AI solution development engagement with Microsoft, with the aim to effectively reduce the subjectivity to screening digital pathology slides, and link up to a Big Data system to find out references to similar cases reported in any part of the world. Besides, in 2021 we will continue to utilize our people and technological resources to withstand our leadership in the reference laboratory segment with a focus on next generation diagnostics.

Anand K., Chief Executive Officer, SRL Diagnostics, Gurugram

“Looking forward to early effective vaccine”

Technology has played an important role in the pandemic. Telemedicine/Teleconsultation made consultation easier for primary and secondary level care for both clinicians as well as patients during this pandemic. This also ensured contactless consultation between patients and their doctors. The latest buzz is now regarding the potential COVID-19 vaccine. India being the largest vaccine manufacturer in the world and having a well-oiled machinery for universal immunisation is better

placed than any other country in the world, to deliver the vaccine to masses. The world, including us in India, is really looking forward to an effective early vaccine. Focusing on the road ahead in the year 2021, new innovations in the field of technology and more stringent government policies will be playing an important role in the development of the healthcare infrastructure and management in India.

Dr Sandeep Budhiraja, Group Medical Director, Max Healthcare, New Delhi

“Resuming expansion plans”

2020 has been a tough year for the health care sector with COVID-19 pandemic flaring up many issues & challenges in the year. While hospital operations were hindered a lot by the COVID-19 pandemic, and people fearing to venture out even for emergencies, maintaining the follow up of critical cases was a choppy ride across the year. June 2020 onwards we saw a little light at the end of the tunnel with more and more patients being able to access corrective eye care and treatments. Every patient who walked in was treated with the utmost care and safety protocols. We stopped all our outreach programmes, which are mass vision check camps, to avoid risks of infection. We stalled all our expansion plans, which were conceived at the beginning of the year and rescheduled it to the year 2021.

Dr GSK Velu, Chairman, MaxiVision Group of Eye hospitals, Hyderabad

“Our products are reusable and washable upto 6 months”

COVID-19 has been undoubtedly the most devastating public health emergency of recent times. The pandemic is far from over, and we must not forget the lessons it has taught us. Even if people are vaccinated, they can be silent spreaders of the virus. So, wearing masks and maintaining basic hygiene are still key preventive measures. We understand the environmental hazards caused by disposable masks, gloves, PPEs and other medical kits. Therefore, our products are reusable and washable upto 6 months, effectively replacing 210 single-use masks and gloves. India has already generated 18,006 tonnes of COVID-19 biomedical waste in the last four months. People must be responsible and should always use products that minimize environmental impact, while ensuring ultimate protection.

Sanjeev Swamy, Inventor, Founder and CEO, Livinguard AG, Switzerland

“Planning to launch at least 2 more satellite labs”

In an effort to reduce turnaround times for tests related to pregnancy health checks including COVID-19 testing, we announced the launch of our brand new modern diagnostic laboratory in Bengaluru dedicated to the complete protection of mother and child. As an exclusive lab for mother & child, this new facility will also offer tests for assessment of pregnancy health inviting genetics testing and RT-PCR testing apart from other routine diagnostic tests. It is our paramount commitment to set up pan-India satellite labs to become more accessible to our customers and offer them exceptional services in such unprecedented times. We further plan to launch at least two more satellite labs in the next six months.”

Mayur Abhaya, Managing Director, LifeCell, Chennai

"Procure enough stock of vaccines at the earliest"

As the new year of 2021 is coming with hope of New Life, still the challenges are many. There is a wide speculation of

emerging Second Wave with a new strain of Corona Virus. It is supposed to spread faster in Community, affect younger children with some new symptoms and signs. We must not take a relaxed step in the new year. We must be extra cautious and watchful to take all preventive measures and detect the disease in the early stages. Hospitals must take all steps to increase the Lab testing facility, separate Covid Patients from Non Covid Patients and gear up with extra infrastructure facilities particularly in the ICU. Adequate medicines and supportive equipment for the treatment should also be procured in advance. General public must be repeatedly educated to wear masks, maintain social distance and avoid going to crowded places. Also, to celebrate Festivals and Functions with limited number of people. The Government should take measures to procure enough stock of Vaccines at the earliest. Proper arrangements to store and deliver the Vaccines to people on priority basis. Finally, we should all remember that Corona Virus is still around us. If we take all necessary precautions, we can prevent from getting it and help in remaining safe.

Dr Dinesh V Kamath, Consultant- Internal Medicine, Manipal Hospitals, Malleswaram, Bengaluru

"E-pharmacy remains a vital cog"

The need for a future ready digital health system has become even more urgent with the COVID-19 Pandemic. ePharmacy provides a building block for such digital health ecosystem to ensure efficient and affordable universal health coverage. As amply evidenced by the performance of e-pharmacies in India, there is a tremendous potential and scope of growth for the sector in India. The retail pharmacy sector needs a lot of supply chain, technology and access solutions to make healthcare delivery more efficient and affordable, and a pre-requisite for this is a simple and clear regulatory pathway for innovation to thrive in this important space. A vibrant e-pharmacy remains a vital cog in the implementation of the National Digital Health Mission. Hence, access to healthcare, affordability of healthcare, quality and authenticity of healthcare, and awareness- all these have to be addressed through technology.

Dr Varun Gupta, Convenor, Digital Health Platforms

"Need to go back to basics"

With regard to public health, COVID-19 has taught us how to manage a pandemic. It has reiterated the need to go back to basics such as implementing and adhering to infection control practices in hospitals, effective surveillance, preparedness and capacity building. SARS-CoV-2 is no longer as mysterious to us today as it was then. We now know enough about the virus so much so that the disease has become manageable. It has taught us few lessons both from the public health point of view as well as clinical for the treating doctor, although many of these lessons have been learnt the hard way at the cost of several lives lost.

Dr KK Aggarwal, President, Confederation of Medical Associations in Asia and Oceania (CMAAO) and Medtalks, Heart Care Foundation of India

"We will see bigger impact of genomics in people's lives"

The need for a seamless omni-channel process across the business for customer centricity at both the doctor and patient level. Some of these processes were refined in the year 2020 based on various considerations. This will only evolve and get enhanced over 2021. With higher visibility for genomic tests we feel that patients and doctors will now be more open to looking at tests leveraging these techniques across various infectious diseases. Tests that would not only give you details of diagnosis and quantification but even drug resistance profiling to evaluate various treatment options possible. We feel with more awareness around genomics and its role we will be seeing a rise in making a bigger impact in people's lives. Some efforts will also go on offering direct to consumer tests that would be of interest to people at large.

Shakun Gidwani, Director, Corporate Marketing and Strategy, MedGenome, Bengaluru
