

Competition is getting fierce among the 'HEALTH STARTUPS' IN INDIA

04 July 2017 | News

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'Health is Wealth' the entire global population lives by this phrase. In this modern era of advanced technology, remaining healthy is not a herculean task but retaining the healthy status in the long run is a major chore. As the technology is advancing so does the number of fatal diseases and it is a continuous skirmish that medical researchers and practitioners have to fight to discover new vaccines and medicines. The entire world is moved by the startup revolution and medical sector is also blitzed by this upheaval. Especially, in a country like India where startups sector received a robust backing from the government with 'Standup India, Startup India', these young budding companies have changed the entire face of the nation.

Over the past few years, healthcare sector has witnessed an exponential growth in the startup sector. It is very interesting to see that most of these ventures are innovative and user friendly. Right from connecting to doctors or to hospitals is now just a click away and patient can receive the entire treatment by sitting at home. Towards the end of 2015, the home healthcare market started growing further when Portea raised a Series B funding amount of \$37.5 million led by existing investors – Accel and International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group; Qualcomm Ventures, and Ventureast.

Speaking about the current scenario, Tejbir Singh, CEO and cofounder, AffordPlan said, "The overall healthcare system in India is complicated. One of the complex realities is of the inequity and yet a very high outof-pocket expense. If we factor in the private healthcare insurance to curb the expense, the challenge is that the private healthcare insurance portfolio has been growing but the penetration is only about 5-6 per cent. Now if we compare India to other peer nations which have gone through a healthcare transformation such as Brazil or South Korea, we will realise that India is lagging behind."

"There are two types of digital healthcare products – preventive and curative. In the first wave, users in India mostly sought curative products. This was typical of user behavior in India - we mostly fix our health once something goes wrong. Preventive healthcare products help users maintain a disciplined and healthy lifestyle so as to avoid illness in the first place.

Users in developed economies have long moved into the preventive mode. While India lags a bit in this cycle, eventually the demand for preventive solutions will catch on in India as well,” said John Paul, CEO and Founder, Maya.

Shedding some light on some of the major immoral practices prevailing among Indians, Saurabh Arora, Founder and CEO, Lybrate said, “On a visit to India, while I was working with Facebook in the US, I noticed that people were consuming medicines just on the advice of chemists and making severe compromises with their health, unintentionally. The chemists were prescribing medicines without requisite skills and expertise. This was rampant in Tier 1 cities where people had time constraints and skipped visiting a doctor because of waiting time at clinics and traffic jams.”

In order to create a smooth path for the patients as well as medical practitioners, startups sector has come up with various innovative ideas that not only provide easy accessibility to medical care but also help in bridging the gap between patients and doctors. BioSpectrum spoke with some of these young ventures to get their contemplations behind their startups.

Affordplan

Affordplan is a pre-payment savings platform for medical expenses. Patients and hospitals can co-design pre-payment plans while keeping in view the patient's medical and financial situation. The patient can make small deposits at a chosen frequency - daily, weekly or monthly - through multiple payment methods. In a layman language, Affordplan is a systematic way of getting to the procedure and availing the treatment in a way that reduces the overall treatment cost by 15-20 per cent.

The estimated healthcare spends in India in 2015 were over \$100 billion. Health care costs are growing aggressively year on year and so are the private out of pocket expenses (>85%). Millions of Indians in the middle income and lower middle income groups struggle to pay for even planned procedures and hospitals have to forego revenues.

“To close this gap, there is a need to develop formal financial services for the healthcare industry. We positioned Affordplan at the intersection of healthcare and fintech to bring financial innovation to healthcare,” said Tejbir Singh, CEO and cofounder, AffordPlan.

“It's always going to be challenging when you bring new products to an industry that has not seen much technology or financial innovation. Initially, it was a challenge to convince patients as well as hospitals. But gradually, as hospitals and patients realised the value that Affordplan brings to them, adoption has been strong. Hospitals endorsing Affordplan to patients and the network synergies across hospitals have helped us to grow aggressively month on month,” added Singh.

Diabetacare

Diabetacare was the first to introduce Smart Connected Glucometer, in 2014, as a part of the IoT strategy to enable round the clock monitoring of patients suffering from Diabetes. The device sends the readings in real time to the central EMR called DXNET which analyses patient data based on the clinical decision making rules in the system to alert Doctors, nurses or kin of the patient. As of date 1000+ patients have used the connected glucometer to control their blood sugar level and optimize the HbA1c levels.

With a focus on 24x7 monitoring and 360-degree care, Diabetacare employs technology that couples a diabetes electronic medical record system with clinical decision-making algorithms. Our DxNET has been devised per the UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

About 70 million people live with diabetes in India and the World Health Organization estimates that an additional 36 million remain ignorant of their condition. This means that nearly 1 in 10 Indians suffers from this condition but is either unaware of it or is slipping through the treatment cracks with inadequate reporting and monitoring. Hence, there is a definite problem with awareness of diabetes among people. Once they become aware, the second problem arises with the acceptance of the disease, at least for the first few years.

“I started Diabetacare in 2013 with the desire to bring about a paradigm shift in diabetes management system in India by moving it from a deeply fragmented model to a 360-degree comprehensive care one. Having worked in the healthcare industry for over two decades -- both in India and with National Health Service in the United Kingdom – I could see the gaps clearly and realized that intelligent use of technology can make a huge difference towards bridging those gaps in chronic disease management, especially diabetes” said Sanjiv Agarwal, Founder and MD, Diabetcare.

He explained further that Diabetcare provides end-to-end care: from screening, monitoring and intervention to patient data analysis and personalized counseling. Its technology enables to automate data collection and presentation, so that its officials can spend more time in providing comprehensive, customized and complete clinical support to our patients.

Healthi

Healthi has a research partnership with the Government of India on the efficacy of chronic disease prediction models. It also has a content partnership with Mayo Clinic to deliver personalized, clinically validated, and relevant preventive health content to users. Combining scientifically validated predictive analytics, machine learning technology, user-friendly design, strong partnerships with healthcare majors and cutting-edge research, healthi is revolutionizing the preventive healthcare market. It has made significant strides within a short span of time and now serves users in over 130 Indian cities.

Healthi claims that it is India's fastest growing digital preventive health startup working towards empowering its users to make smart choices and avoid chronic illnesses. It is a one-stop digital preventive health guide providing access to the best practitioners and raising awareness on the prevention and management of lifestyle diseases.

"As with most innovations, healthi was born out of dissatisfaction with the status quo. Our family had a history of heart disease and high blood pressure, an unfortunate common occurrence amongst India's population. Anxious about whether I would suffer the same fate, I diligently invested in a health check-up every year. I became increasingly frustrated that the outcome of my health tests was a report that was unintelligible to people like me. Every journey begins with knowing where you stand. We believed that through technology and analytics we can enable individuals to better understand their current health and create a path to a better future. This is how healthi was born," said Krishna Ulagaratchagan, Co-Founder and CEO, healthi.in

Adding further, he informed that the venture has a highly experienced team and a record of facilitating more than 10 lakh tests with 95 per cent user satisfaction and 90 per cent customer retention. Since its very inception, healthi has tied-up with the industry and research leaders of renowned healthcare units across the country. For health check offering, it has joined hands with most of the leading diagnostic and imaging laboratories, clinics and hospitals in India, thus offering 400+ high-quality venue options for users.

Lybrate

Lybrate is an online doctor consultation platform which connects doctors and patients through its health app and making them communicate using mobile phones. The company is on its mission to change the way healthcare is delivered in India and herald a promising future.

While the platform offers patients the opportunity to seek multiple opinions from doctors for free and initiate a one-on-one dialogue with any healthcare expert on payment of professional fees online, the unique health feed having tips from doctors aims to encourage preventive mindset among the Indian population and make them live healthy and fit. Lybrate also helps health experts build their reputation online and allows them to practice beyond boundaries, thus serve more people.

It has recently launched an integrated healthcare solution 'Lybrate Lab+', enabling users to consult doctors online, get suggested lab tests done without any hassles of stepping out and continues consultation upon automatic sharing of reports with healthcare experts, without breaking the loop.

While sharing the inception story of Lybrate, Saurabh Arora, Founder and CEO, Lybrate said "The core problem of Indian healthcare delivery was huge crunch of doctors in the country, which was causing their severe scarcity. So while finding a doctor was easier, communicating with them was a big challenge. At Facebook, I connected SMEs and large advertisers to their customers using Facebook Ads. We used the experience to connect patients with doctors much in the same way through a platform that would enable them to communicate with each other, and thus solve the real problem that plagued the Indian healthcare system. This finally led to the inception of Lybrate in 2014."

"Healthcare is a very personal, private and sensitive affair for everyone. Any online health platform has to ensure privacy is maintained, and trust is built. Before starting out, we researched about basic issues people were concerned about while using an online healthcare platform, and fixed them," added Arora.

eMediNexus

eMediNexus is a content focused app that helps in keeping doctors updated with the latest advancements and clinical cases in medicine so that they can improve their knowledge, diagnose, and treat patients more efficiently and with more precision. It also gives the doctors an option to take second opinions from other practitioners on the go thereby reducing the need for the patient to be referred to an already overburdened doctor.

eMediNexus provides a team of Medico-legal experts who answer any legal queries that a doctor might face related to medical malpractice, negligence, and other legal issues. It also enables real time conference updates of all national specialty

medical conferences across India as they happen.

Explaining about the venture, Aggarwal, Co- Founder, eMediNexus said, “eMediNexus is a doctor network, medical content hub, and advocacy platform for the medical practitioners. The concept behind it is to provide doctors with the last 24 hours in medicine. It’s a free application for doctors to join, share information about their practice, engage in clinical discussions with peers across India of various specialties, and learn from interactive and instructional content.”

Discussing about challenges faced during the roll out of eMediNexus, Aggarwal said that the major challenge faced by the organization is converting doctors from across the nation, with varying degrees of technology literacy, onto a digital forum. Furthermore, this challenge is also faced when building channel partnerships with key healthcare associations or other ecosystem engagement.

Conclusion

Certainly, these young ventures have changed the entire spectrum of healthcare sector in India. With the help these apps, medical care is just a click away but this has also blown a trumpet of online combat between these startups. Currently, it may look like a wide field to play in but in the coming years, there will be more players joining these online battle and then it will become a cut throat competition