

“We intend to add 4 million members to our current base of half a million by 2020”

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India is on the verge of transforming its each and every sector to digitisation. With Prime Minister, Narendra Modi giving a green signal to ‘Digital India’ campaign, it has fumed a new energy among the big players of various sectors. Recently, Indian Health Organisation also joined the digital healthcare sector with its vHealth, an app based medical service provider. In an exclusive interview with BioSpectrum, Manasije Mishra, MD, Indian Health Organisation and Aetna India, sheds some more light on digitisation in healthcare sector and how vHealth is uniquely different from its counterparts.



How your product can bridge the gap between patients and the doctors?

vHealth by aetna is a unique integrated primary care ecosystem, it's like a doctor in the family. vHealth brings telemedicine trained doctors very close to masses without compromising on quality or convenience. Any health problem whether it's a

major one or minor, vHealth's inhouse doctors can be reached through a toll-free number and newly launched mobile app for voice and video consultation respectively. Our doctors spend quality time in understanding the patient's social, family and medical history and probe with questions relevant to their condition to arrive at an appropriate diagnosis. Most important aspect of our service is the follow-up, our doctors proactively follow-up with patients to ensure there is a proper handholding across the treatment journey of patients.

Out of 5000 consults completed till date, it makes me proud to say that our doctors at vHealth were able to provide the appropriate diagnosis and treatment to 70% of the cases which led to avoidance on any further medical support. Several patients have illustrated that we have been successful in identifying the root cause of their long-standing medical problems. Apart from managing acute and chronic patients, we have helped to diagnose cases like hemochromatosis (iron overload), gastric cancer, triple vessel disease, nephrology, parkinson-plus and more.

How you are planning to spread your wings in India?

We have our distribution network in 300+ cities along with our end-to-end primary care channel of medicine delivery and blood tests. Our specialist partner network is available in 38 major cities. We intend to add four million members to our current membership base of half a million by 2020. We are confident that with clinical excellence and the widespread partner network, we will be able to achieve this.

How many hospitals and clinics have you tied-up with?

With an objective to deliver high-quality medical care and end-to-end healthcare services, vHealth by aetna has partnerships with the reputed health partners both in India and across the globe.

- Our state of the art telemedicine center has a clinical partnership with MEDGATE AG, a Swiss-based market leader for over 15 years in telemedicine. Our inhouse doctors are trained and certified for telemedicine after an extensive written and practical assessment. These doctors also follow a robust clinical protocol which enables them to diagnose the root cause of the patient's medical problem.
- Our telemedicine service is supported by 16,500 highly reputed clinicians in our medical partner network with which we can organize blood tests, medicine delivery at patients home or even refer them to appropriate specialists for consultation in their vicinity at a discounted fee.

What are the elements that make you unique from others?

vHealth by Aetna is a digital primary care service with telemedicine at its heart that offers quality care and clinical excellence in addition to convenience. With our focus to make quality healthcare accessible in India, we have tied up with Medgate A.G. a Swiss market leader in telemedicine. They have developed the science of remote diagnosis for over 15 years. We use these detailed medical and training protocols, customized for India. We also use their robust patient management system. In addition to that, the following measures set us apart:

- We recruit well qualified and experienced doctors from reputed institutes. These doctors undergo four weeks telemedicine training and get certified to Swiss standards of teleconsultation after an extensive written and practical assessment.
- Our doctors have the ability to diagnose patients through scientific evidence-based protocols. If a patient presents with a chronic headache it could be due to a migraine, tension, eye problems, medication, neurological problems, sleep deficiency, cervical spondylosis, brain tumor etc. Our clinical protocols help doctors to probe in a systematic way and unravel relevant points. This information along with medical history, photographs, and test reports enable us to diagnose or make referrals.
- Consistent follow-up with the patient throughout the journey of the disease also helps our doctors assess the response to the treatment and take corrective action if required.
- Recording of consultations are reviewed by our Medical Director, scored against a detailed checklist and regular feedback provided.
- We also ask patients to rate the consultation as well as the overall service
- In addition to all the above, the medical ecosystem in association with major players in the health sector specializing in different domains like- diagnostics, pharmacy, consultations & treatment helps our members use vHealth by Aetna as the 1st point of contact for any health problems.

India is now transforming to 'Digital India'. Do you think the country is ready for this transformation?

India has 432 million mobile users with over 76% of people using internet on mobile. Availability of high speed 3G and 4G connectivity are driving the usage of apps and videos. Mobile and internet technology has the power to transform the lives even in the farthest corners of the country. This will empower all Indians and power new business models.

How digitization could help the healthcare sector to serve this country better?

Lack of access to a robust primary healthcare system, increasing out of pocket medical costs and poor doctor to patient ratio are some of the key challenges in the Indian healthcare sector. As a result, the disease burden of the country is increasing. The challenge can be tackled better by bringing quality digital primary healthcare system within reach. A digital primary care system that provides access to highly trained physicians who can provide the appropriate treatment, guidance and motivation as required.

In a country, where huge chunk of population still drives its livelihood from agriculture, do you think that digital healthcare could revolutionize their life, especially when most of them are not that tech savvy?

In a global mHealth adoption study conducted by PwC in 2012, India was ranked second among the developing countries in terms of maturity. The study established that consumers in developing countries like India have high expectations for digital healthcare and 60% of the consumers strongly believe that mHealth will improve the convenience, cost, and quality of their healthcare.

There is a widespread access to mobile/telephone that can enable people to access quality medical services on phone and get proper treatment and advice.