

[India]

## Health Database in an Information Society\*<sup>1</sup>

Jitendra B. PATEL,<sup>1</sup> Narendra SAINI<sup>2</sup>

Twenty first century is the age of informatics. India reports that all of the listed actions to promote an enabling environment for information and communication technologies (ICT) in the health sector have been taken and are rated from slightly to moderately effective. National mechanisms such as an information policy, an e-Strategy, and an e-Health policy have been put in place between 2000 and 2002 to promote the use of ICT. Specific health sector mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships, procurement policies, public and private funding and e-health standards have been successfully introduced since 1998.

ICT in the health sector:

- a) enactment of the Information Technology Act 2000, providing a legal basis for all digitally related information actions and privacy issues;
- b) comprehensive guidelines and recommendations for IT infrastructure in health (2003);
- c) creation of a task force on the topic of telemedicine (2005).

A national policy to reduce the costs of ICT infrastructure for the health sector will be implemented over the next few years. India highlights the launch in 2007 of Health statistics, which is likely to strengthen specific health planning & network communications. Among the most effective actions so far in building ICT infrastructure for the health sector has been the creation of more than one hundred pilot projects in telemedicine with connectivity and funding support from the Indian Space Research Organization. The Ministry of Finance has mandated that 3% of the budget of all government spending will go to ICT, which has created a culture of ICT usage in government.

India reports that efforts in providing health information to the citizen are undertaken by dis-

ease control program (for Example—Nikshay in TB control program), which provide prevention and control-related information. Currently all major associations of health professionals are developing web-based information sources. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology took the lead in promoting action on standards and guidelines for ICT initiatives, and ICT issues are also high on the Ministry of Health’s agenda.

India has started talking about adoption of Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) which is a good sign. It was Confucius who once remarked “a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.” The concept of EMR is gathering steam, with several health care & insurance providers. The development of a common strategy and roadmap for e-health standards development, to support interoperability and the adoption of electronic patient records is crucial.

With the exponential increase in mobile telephony and the imminent deployment of 3G, it is imperative that broad band wireless technology be exploited and used to develop m-Health.

Indian Medical Association (IMA) started database of the all the members with their specialties. The strength of the directory technology is its fast look up capabilities.

**Mobile App to collect epidemiology data on Vector Borne Infectious diseases:** The objective is to set up an infrastructure to collect epidemiological data of the diseases, by developing a simple app on the smart mobile phones.

IMA to spearhead and establish a process of collecting epidemiological data.

In this global information society, this user oriented services of health care information can

---

\*1 This article is based on a presentation made at the Symposium “Health Database in an Information Society” held at the 29th CMAAO General Assembly and 50th Council Meeting, Manila, the Philippines, on September 24-26, 2014.

<sup>1</sup> National President, Indian Medical Association, New Delhi, India.

<sup>2</sup> Honorary Secretary General, Indian Medical Association, New Delhi, India (hsg@ima-india.org).

achieve effective horizontal integration of networked information services, which will have an impact on the quality care of the patient. The current vision comprises affordable wireless access to health care services, for all the citizens, thus making medical expertise a shared resource, whenever and wherever needed.

Coordination with other inter-departments still remains a challenge.

Provision of Internet access in rural areas

(where approximately 65% of the total population dwell) and the great diversity of languages across regions are listed as the most significant challenges in this field. India's healthcare information technology market is expected to hit US\$1.45 billion in 2018, more than three times the US\$381.3 million reached in 2012, according to a report by Frost and Sullivan.

Keeping confidentiality & sensitive issues information is still a challenge.