

Producing a “Wow” effect while deploying Telehealth

With Covid-19 acting as a Global Chief Transformation Officer, Telehealth is slowly getting integrated into the core of the healthcare delivery system. The Central Government, State Governments, PSU's, corporate, trust hospitals, polyclinics and individual doctors are accepting that remote health care is here to stay. For the last 21 years the author has been evangelising that distance is meaningless and that Geography has become History. It is therefore reassuring that rules and regulations regarding telemedicine are being formalized. Hundreds of webinars have sensitized stakeholders in the eco system, about importance of Digital Health. It is heartening to see the National Digital Health Mission taking proactive steps. The existing public-private, urban-rural health divide is narrowing and converging.



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As a clinician belonging to the BC era (a neurosurgeon trained, before computers came to hospitals) I am concerned that the emphasis now is on technology. Digital doctors will become experts in deploying software, hardware, handling connectivity issues, video conferencing systems, Apps on smart phones, digital manipulation (pun intended !) UPI, EMR, PHR, HIS etc. He/ she would be future ready.



Somewhere along the line is there a real danger of the smart young doctor forgetting that technology is only a means to an end and not an end by itself. A fool with a tool is still a fool ! Exercising clinical judgement is contextual. SoP's and protocols are guidelines. In healthcare one size does not fit all. We need to cater to the specific wants and needs of the beneficiary, who is on a screen at the remote end. We need to get into his/ her mind. We need to listen, listen, listen . Building patient rapport, confidence and trust is vital in a teleconsultation. Body language and webside manners need to show how much you care, not how much you know. Healthcare is a calling not a business, an art based on science. On a screen, caring is conveyed through body posture, voice intonation, the way one looks/sits, attire, movement of hands and arms and spontaneous smiling. A proper teleconsulting chamber, conveying sympathy, empathy and TLC (tender, loving, care) virtually will do wonders in producing a “wow” effect. Every beneficiary of Digital Health will then be a brand ambassador. 5G, 200 Mbps bandwidth, super smart phones or giant screens cannot replace a virtual personal touch.