



“The future of the sector is bright, as professional healthcare institutes are mushrooming across the country”

Dinesh Shenoy, senior advisory consultant, 21st Century Health Management Solutions.

With over 23 years of rich experience, he has been instrumental in providing IT solutions to various industries and verticals. He has in-depth knowledge about the industry and the emerging trends that would take the healthcare IT segment forward.

Role of IT in healthcare and Indian scenario...

IT plays a significant role today, as it is a business enabler. More so, the effective use of IT and communications technology has enabled the access of healthcare to hitherto remote areas. There is more predictability and reliability with the use of IT systems & processes in an otherwise person dependent scenario.

In India, the use of IT in healthcare is fragmented. Some institutes use disparate systems, while others have enterprise-wide systems in place at the top end. On the applications side, the focus of a large majority of institutes is on the administrative functions like billing, materials, etc. However, now there is a small but growing demand and deployment of applications for clinical purposes.

Emerging trends...

Some of the emerging trends include the increasing use of innovative devices like RFID, smart cards, e-pens, hand-held devices like PDAs, tablet PCs, modern-day diagnostic laboratory equipment. These devices offer digital interfacing and facilitate shorter turnaround times. The use of telemedicine including Teleradiology and Telepathology also assist patients in getting better clinical care without having to travel.

Cost-effectiveness in healthcare IT...

Healthcare IT investments pay for itself, either directly in a financial manner or by promoting preventive healthcare. This indirectly increases the productivity of human resources. Generally, healthcare institutes tend to overstock materials at various stock locations, thus increasing carrying costs. However, with proper systems, the optimum stock levels can be maintained without the attendant risks of stock-outs. In case of enterprise wide chains, economies of scale can be achieved by common procurement across various entities within the chain. As far as hardware systems are concerned, clients could be deployed across the hospital connected through terminal servers, thus bringing about savings in both one-time as repetitive maintenance costs and also providing reliability.

Combating challenges...

Healthcare IT implementation in India is comparatively at a nascent stage. Most hospitals are not networked and the IT systems in place are usually not interoperable. Due to this, the hospital cannot provide holistic solutions. It is advisable to get all laboratory information management systems, imaging systems, electronic medical records, telemedicine and patient portals from a single provider, thus ensuring interoperability & avoiding duplication of efforts.

Future possibilities...

The future of the sector is bright, as professional healthcare institutes are mushrooming across the country. Also, the world has now become a global village. Now a scan done in the US can be reported in India within the same day, which otherwise would have taken a couple of days. Such things are possible because of IT & communication technologies. Also, proper implementations of healthcare IT systems facilitate institutes get accreditation from both national as well as international agencies.

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