

Impact of COVID-19 on Healthcare sector of India

By

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ABSTRACT

Being the second largest populated country after China, India has also suffered the unequal trauma due to Covid pandemic situation. As World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Covid 19 pandemic an outbreak affecting the countries and people worldwide it has a catastrophic impact over the economy of India also, the very first case of corona virus was came into light on 29 January, 2020. With the population of 1.3 billion, the Indian economy was trying to make a balance between Healthcare and economy. Government of India with this regard took many initiatives for taking a control over community spread, regional and nationwide lockdowns were imposed which initially was successful but later on in economic slowdown, it resulted in affecting the lives of millions of people. The study explores the spread of corona virus in rural areas of the country as well as the emergency response of its healthcare system to tackle the situation of rising pandemic cases.

Keywords: Covid-19, India, Healthcare systems.

Introduction

The Pandemic arised from Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) in December 2019, which has originated in Wuhan city, China. This was named as Novel Corona Virus by Chinese official authorities along with World Health Organisation. A group of 40 cases approximately was reported there out of which some were vendors and others were dealers in the seafood market namely 'Huanan'. The very first death of 61 year old male from COVID-19 was revealed by China on 11th January. Few weeks later, the virus infection spread across all over the world at a speedy pace. After that WHO announced this as International Concern of 'Public Health Emergency' on 30th January 2020. After knowing that the virus has affected more than 114 countries all over the globe, the WHO announced it a pandemic – COVID-19 on 11th March (Roya, Tripathya, Kar, Sharmaa, Vermaa, & Kaushal, 2020).

Till May17th, 2020 there were 4 million confirmed cases with WHO and even more than 3,00,000 deaths. For preventing the critical spread of the virus, various measures were taken up by the State and National governments like: lockdowns, isolation, and social distancing which restricted the movement of people and affect their lives. It had also a great effect over the health care sector in India. (Iyengar, Mabrouk, Jain, Venkatesan, & Vaishya, 2020)

In words of some authors Hospitals are defined as the 'monuments to diseases' which are set up for the care and treatment of patients but in the scenario of pandemic it had become unaffordable to common people in country due to some governing healthcare policies. Despite the implementation of National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) since 2005 the healthcare system of India still face a continuous challenge (Bajpai, 2014).

The doctors treating patients in Wuhan are cheerful as compared to Indian doctors. The Government of India took measures to stop the widespread of Covid-19 virus which is praiseworthy, but being a 'developing country' it requires training to healthcare sector. Wearing PPE, and ICU availability stood at major serious concern for doctors, as in public sector there was lack of ICU and technology. On other side private sector also found it difficult to manage contagious virus spread among people. Its concern was about the supply of ventilators and PPE's for sick patients because the government of UK and USA also failed to supply adequate amount of it to healthcare workers. (Misra, 2020)

Impact of Pandemic on Indian Health Care Sector:

As discussed in above paragraph that Corona has a great and catastrophic impact over the health

care systems globally, it also shaken the foundation of Indian health care industry too. Both private and ublic sector got affected equally, in spite of this the private sector hospital contributed toward prevention from virus infection. Many of them initiated various plans like enhancing infrastructure, isolation departments, medical treatment kits and other equipments with extra workforce in order to respond COVID-19. Government of India strengthened measures with attaching mobile applications at state and national level both, Aarogya Setu app is one of the example of the applications. (Mistry, 2021)

The Health workforce and Universal Health Coverage

Attaining the Universal Health Coverage is one of the important targets which the United Nations set up while adopting the SDG's in 2015. Although improvement in health services of different service and income groups has been recorded through the UHC index which is- Service Coverage Index (SCI) increasing from an average of 45 (out of 100) in 2000 to 66 in 2017. According to WHO, 'Overall, financial protection prior to COVID-19 has been deteriorating. The proportion of the population with out-of-pocket spending exceeding 10% of their household budget rose from 9% to 13% and those exceeding 25% rose from 1.7% to 2.9%, over the period 2000-2015.'

As well, the global health workforce responded in heroic manner since the beginning of pandemic. Consequently, the year 2021 has

been designated as 'International Year of Health and Care Workers' in appraisal of voluntary dedication of health care team against a fight with COVID-19. Still the world needs millions more of them to achieve universal health coverage by year 2030. (World Health Statistics 2021: A visual summary, 2021)

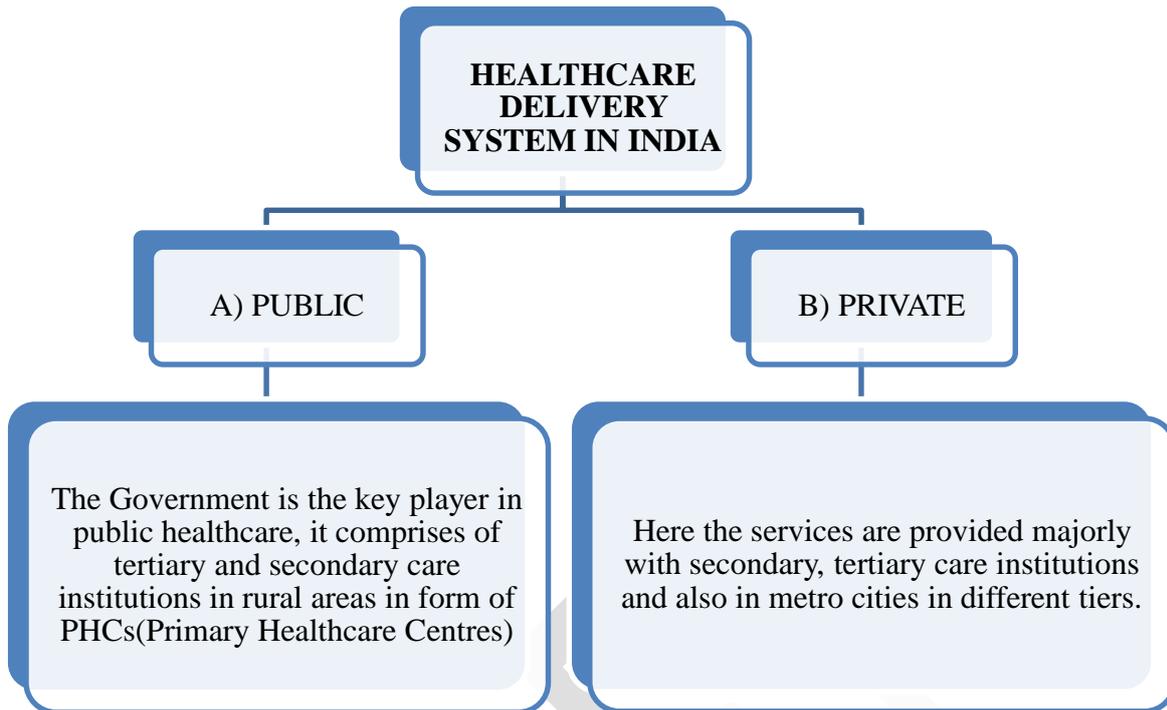
Disturbance in Healthcare supply chain:

With reduction of regular supply of face masks, hand sanitizers and many more items, corona virus has created destruction across the world. Disruption in the supply of medical equipments affected various activities like management in health care units, procurement of necessary commodities of health care. China is well known largest supplier of medical devices among countries but being an epicentre of the pandemic china as well as other countries like India exposed to COVID-19 (Rinswer, 2021)

Indian Healthcare and Delivery System:

Healthcare sector is known as India's one of the most renowned area, in terms of employment as well as revenue generation. It includes medical services, clinics, hospitals, telemedicine, other medical equipments and related facilities respectively. Healthcare sector of India is nowadays growing at vigorous pace because of wide service coverage to the public.

Healthcare delivery system of India comprises of 2 major components which are Public system and Private system.



India has an important competitive advantage in form of large pool of well trained medical professionals within it. It is said to be competitive in relation with cost as, cost of surgery is approximately 1/10th of cost in Western Europe and USA. According to the data available online regarding COVID-19 vaccine as on 15 June 2021, more than 26.68 crore doses had been administered in country. **(Indian Healthcare Industry Analysis - IBEF, 2010)**

Government Initiatives

In order to promote healthcare sector in India, the Government took various initiatives like:

- As recorded in May 2021, approximately 11.9 lakh health identities have been generated and registered on NDHM platform.
- Defence Minister - Mr. Rajnath Singh in May 2021, revealed 'Services e-Health Assistance & Teleconsultation (SeHAT)' portal for OPD to provide services of telemedicine to arm forces.
- A campaign namely 'Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0-' started in March 2021, to reach pregnant women and children who

were missed out of routine immunisation due to pandemic.

- In March 2021, the Parliament passed 'National Commission for allied Healthcare Professions Bill 2021', which targets to create a body for regulation and maintenance of standards and education services for professionals in healthcare.
- As per the Union Budget 2021, health infrastructure's investment expanded 2.37 times approx. And allocation of health care sector for FY22 stood nearly as Rs. 223,846 crore.
- Government of India also announced Rs. 64,180 crore for healthcare sector in Union Budget to strengthen the 'National Health Mission' by various measures in primary, secondary healthcare systems.

Future of Healthcare Sector

India is having an economy full of strengths and opportunities for the players of medical industry. Being a developing country, India is gradually leading in terms of high-end diagnostic equipments and services with a huge capital investment. Indian healthcare industry is very much diversified in

different segments including medical technology, public and private players etc. With increase in competition, every business is looking forward to generate latest innovative trends and technologies for having positive impact upon their business. The Government of India plans to increase the spending

of public health up to 2.5% of India's GDP by the year 2025. Competitive advantage of India also lies in increased success rate of companies in getting approvals through ANDA (Abbreviated New Drug Application). **(Indian Healthcare Industry Analysis - IBEF, 2010)**

Health care Sector: 3 Phases

Phases	Outcome
Past	The healthcare sector was not well prepared with equipments and technologies to tackle COVID-19 pandemic situation. There was also lack of acknowledgement about the infectious disease and its global impact.
Present	Health care industry is struggling and coping up with serious threats and challenges across the globe, to make a balance between demand and supply of medical equipments. Pharmaceutical firms are working hard for facing the current situation of outbreak.
Future	As we know that healthcare units spending for COVID-19 is increasing exponentially, firms that conduct survey, research, produce test kits, develop vaccines, and other supply medical equipment are likely to be benefitted the most in future. Innovative ideas and preventive measures would become a norm in healthcare sector, in near future.

Various Health Related Schemes:

1. Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)

:
It was centrally sponsored scheme which was implemented by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, under the act namely 'Unorganised Worker's Social Securities Act, 2008'.

Main aim of the scheme was to provide a health insurance cover to BPL families along with other 11 categories of Unorganised workers like construction workers, MNREGA workers, mine and sanitation workers etc.

Families enrolled in this scheme were entitled the benefits of upto Rs 30,000 per annum for hospitalisation in hospitals under RSBY

2. Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS):

Under this scheme insurance cover was provided to senior citizens. It was implemented w.e.f 01.04.2016. It provided additional coverage of 30,000 to them. The RSBY and SCHIS had been

subsumed or merged under “Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana”

3. Umbrella Scheme of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN):

Under this Umbrella Scheme, financial assistance upto Rs.15 lakh is provided to poor patients as one-time grant which belong to families below poverty line, suffering from major diseases like cancer and rare diseases of kidney, liver, heart etc.

Components	No. Of patients	Amount Released (in crore)
Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi	9,75,64,694	129
Health Minister's Cancer Patient Fund	9,93,75,110	94
Rare Disease	5,90,00,000	30

Source: Annual Report 2020-21

Health Scheme of Central Government:

Establishment of CGHS scheme was done for the benefit of retired employees of central government with their families. According to the data provided in annual report, the scheme was announced and started in Delhi in 1954 and now approximately the it has spreaded over 74 cities serving nearly 12.83 lacs primary cardholders and 37.49 lacs other beneficiaries.

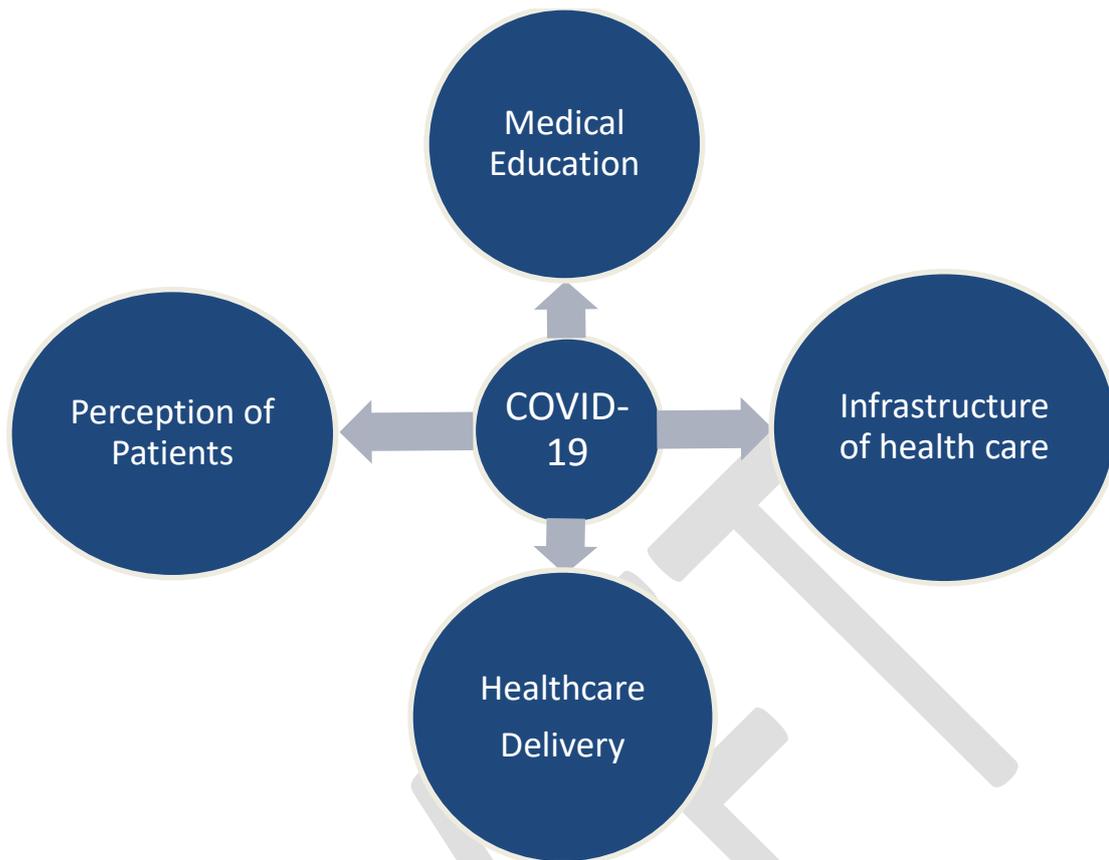
Facilities available to CGHS beneficiaries

- It provides various facilities like OPD and medicines through its large network

of labs Wellness Centres, and polyclinics etc.

- Beneficiaries under this scheme are allowed to seek OPD consultation from specialists of private hospitals. (Department of Health & Family Welfare Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Government of India , 2020-21)

Improvement needed in future health care



Digitization in Healthcare Sector:

COVID-19 brought a biggest change in adopting digital technology in India. Everything was shut down during the pandemic which were essential part in person's life but on other hand the other ways of doing (substitute) activities like shopping, banking etc were seen at a steep rise by making use of digital technology. Healthcare is the only sector which is seen as up taking the most digital technology in it. This pandemic brought digital or tech-healthcare to forefront in lime light. (Bhambere, B, & Sumit, 2021)

Conclusion

As we know that COVID-19 pandemic started rising at a great peak from the city Wuhan in China, across the globe having a long lasting destructive impact. Apart from increasing number of positive cases of the virus and deaths, it has negative impacts over the economies of different countries as well. After the declaration of COVID-19 a 'pandemic' in March 2020, various restrictions and prohibitions

were taken up in action like on movement of people, imposing strict lockdowns at different levels, etc for stopping the spread of the infectious virus.

The major challenge is faced by the healthcare sector of economies especially India, due to lack of preparedness in advance for such unpredictable disease and shortage of supply of medical equipments like PPE.

Eventually, the lack of supply and shortage deficiencies are exposed by COVID-19 in the economies across the globe, which has prompted the health care sector to wake up and discover new technologies and essentials for the care of patients in well manner.

It also paved positive effects or opportunities to people thus, despite of disruption globally it has several positive effects like: role of personal hygiene, infection control, effective use of telemedicine, exercises and much more.

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