

HP deploys virtual health platform for rural India

03 June 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that by 2020, mental illness will move from the 20th position to the second largest illness worldwide surpassing physical ailments like polio and tuberculosis. Therefore, with a population of over one billion, and a vast geography, it is difficult for skilled medical professionals to penetrate and address the scale of psychiatric healthcare delivery required in India.

Working in this direction, HP has launched a new initiative on June 01, 2013, to improve access, quality and efficiency of global health, facilitates psychiatric care without requiring either the doctor or the patient travelling to meet each other. HP will network a central hub with remote smaller centers as well as provide a specially outfitted virtual health van that will enable delivery of remote consultations in rural towns and villages. The central hubs will be connected via voice, SMS, imaging, and videoconferencing technology to once-a-week clinics in smaller centers that would be temporarily established. The hub will be equipped with an IT platform that will link with medical diagnostic equipment such as digital stethoscopes and digital ECGs to facilitate remote patient diagnosis and medical consultation.

"At HP, social innovation is at the heart of our business, and we are committed to applying our technologies, resources and expertise to address complex world problems and make a positive difference," said Commander Girish Kumar, Practice Head, India - Healthcare & Life Sciences, HP Enterprise Services. "In India, it is estimated that only 10 percent of mental health patients receive active psychiatric assistance or help.¹ The virtual health technology solution aims to improve efficiencies in delivery of quality psychiatric care to under-served rural, semi-urban and remote areas in India," he added.

HP is piloting the platform with MSC Trust, a leading NGO specialised in providing psychiatric solutions to patients in rural Tamil Nadu in south India. HP's virtual health platform will support MSC Trust's efforts to extend the reach of psychiatric care in rural India by providing the required Information technology infrastructure and improving awareness through continued education of medical personnel onsite.

"Psychiatric illness carries a heavy stigma and treatment in rural parts of the country is often based on religious beliefs and

superstitions. Technology plays a critical role in enabling proper medical treatment, such as early diagnosis and intervention, which can significantly improve the efficacy of the treatment and medication." said Dr. C. Ramasubramaniam, Founder and Consultant Psychiatrist, MSC Trust.

A similar set-up is also being deployed in an air-conditioned virtual health van that will serve as a mobile clinic to provide remote consultation through video conferencing and digital diagnosis in remote rural parts of Tamil Nadu.

A mobile based application called Medication Alert & Adherence System (MAAS) has also been co-developed by HP's Enterprise Services team in consultation with HP Labs. It uses mobile phones to monitor a patient's medicine intake. MAAS issues SMS reminders to the patient or their caregiver, based on the doctor's prescription which is stored in a central Health Information System. The patient's affirmative or negative intake response can be recorded and transmitted via SMS and subsequently serves as data that can be used for clinical observations, outcome analysis and to determine drug efficacy.