

## Telemedicine to enhance quality of clinical care available to rural population

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### Telemedicine exhibits significant socio-economic benefits to patients



An economy is as healthy as its people with the health of a population directly influencing the financial health of a nation. India, a nation with its steadily rising population is also a constantly evolving economy. To take care of the health and proficiency of this thriving nation, telemedicine has emerged as a digital intervention proving to be bliss in health and medicine. It has been there for quite some time in other parts of the world but has not been explored extensively in India due to lack of proper guidelines. With the Covid-19 pandemic ripping the world and the looming social distancing measures further limiting the physical access to healthcare services, the Indian Government and the Medical Council of India acted proactively and released guidelines on the use of telemedicine in medical practice in India to bridge this gap.

Telemedicine exhibits significant socio-economic benefits to patients and families, health-care providers and the overall health-care system of a nation. As the Super Specialists are mostly situated in the urban vicinities, their expertise and services cannot be accessed easily by the rural population due to extended travel times, lack of awareness, and general inconvenience in physically accessing these services. Hence, thus contributing to minimizing the urban-rural health disparities in India. Not only will this raise the socio-economic status of the rural populace, but also the professional development opportunities and support from specialists through Telehealth may aid to rise in the rural medical workforce recruitment and retention.

Additionally, telemedicine is an excellent tool for follow-ups and second opinions. One can also use this cost-effective method for the first consult in case of morbid and old-age patients as well as patients coming from impassable locations as they can be monitored remotely, which not only saves the time and expenses of the patient in travel but also hospital's infrastructure cost in terms of staff and other resources, in case the patients were to be treated in-person. Moreover, early detection and diagnosis of the disease lessen the financial burden of treatment required for the complicated stage of the illness.

Furthermore, it will lead to improved health outcomes via regular monitoring of various health parameters of patients using fitness bands and other portable devices. Currently, heart rate, ECG, step and activity count, oxygen-saturation monitors are already in use. More patents, including transdermal blood sugar monitoring, are under review. These methods of regular

remote monitoring will not only help in identifying the inconsistencies in patients' health but will also help in providing high standards of healthcare without overwhelming our healthcare systems.

On the top of that, medical tourism has been a propagating sector in India from quite some time and telehealth startups like Docterz.com, Practo, Docs App among others may act as comprehensive channels for communication with patients overseas who seek top-notch and affordable treatment, thus contributing towards our economic growth. To recapitulate, social welfare of a population primarily depends upon the healthcare ecosystem of a nation, therefore, significantly increasing the access to healthcare across masses using Telehealth will certainly improve the quality of human life and optimize their health, further increasing the overall life expectancy of our nation and, consequently contributing to the economic growth in India.

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