**BioVoice News Webinar**

**India’s Roadmap to Digital Healthcare: Challenges and Opportunities**

**Moderator: Rahul Koul**, Chief Editor, BioVoice News

**Speakers: Ajay Sharma**, Founder, DESH Clinic **I Dr. Raja Indana**, Medical Director, MFine **I** **Himanshu Sikka**, Project Director, SAMRIDH; Chief Strategy & Diversification Officer (Health, Nutrition &amp; WASH), IPE Global **I Enbasekar D**, Chief Technical Officer, MediBuddy

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SAMRIDH Healthcare Blended Financing Facility, supported by USAID, participated in a panel discussion featuring an eminent group of physicians and healthcare stakeholders on Saturday, 30th April 2022. This session hosted by BioVoice News, examined the rise of digital platforms during COVID-19 pandemic, and how India is witnessing the rise of digital technology across value chains and business sectors.

Divided into three key sessions, SAMRIDH leveraged this opportunity to highlight how the rise of digital platforms will affect patient-doctor relationships, digitalization in hospital settings, larger policy framework, patient data protection, and the importance of preparing a digitally skilled health workforce. Himanshu Sikka, Project Director, SAMRIDH and Chief Strategy &amp; Diversification Officer (Health, Nutrition WASH), IPE Global, touched upon how it is essential to mirror digital healthcare from an overall landscape perspective which encapsulates a broad range of services, from the tertiary to secondary sectors, and how they are using technology in their facilities. Going forward, the challenge would be to capitalize on the momentum that COVID-19 has provided to digital healthcare. Despite telehealth's potential, we still have a long way to go before it is able to replace the first contact point or physical examinations by physicians. In regards to the adoption of Electronic Medical Records (EMR), Mr. Sikka mentioned the need for a consent mechanism to use data collected at hospitals. Correct decisions should be made based on a patient's past history. This has to be complemented with a strong patient data protection framework to protect any data leakages. Different types of data exchange servers need to be designed and put in place. Further, the private sector in collaboration with the public sector will play an important role to ensure that the digital framework gets implemented on the ground. Lastly, as a healthcare industry, we need to focus on training the general workforce on technical skills to make them digitally equipped.

**Other highlights of the discussion:**

* Earlier point of care was at hospital with physicians, now with digital it is becoming patient-centric as services are available at home. With the digital transformation, we see a shift from care to convenience to a patient-centric paradigm.
* Digital transformation is not necessarily a replacement for traditional methods of care, but is a key component of advancing it.
* With the rise of many digital health platforms, confidentiality clauses have to be followed. This would require stronger data protection systems to ensure patient privacy is maintained. Therefore, safe EMR is the need of the hour.
* Early interventions can give better health outcomes and we need a high amount of manpower in rural areas for better outcomes. We continue to lack a trained health workforce. Private sector has to take more responsibility and come forward with more initiatives to support the ecosystem.

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