

DAY 2, SESSION 3.2. STATE GOVERNANCE IN DIGITAL INDIA

Healthcare Futures and the National Digital Health Mission

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India has one of the largest populations in the world, yet public expenditure on health comprises approximately 1% of the country's GDP. This has led to a large private industry and a significant burden in health costs for most households. The National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) aims to create centralised access to health services and this is expected to streamline the health system in India. However, questions regarding data protection, infrastructure, community reach, costs and the need for a better regulatory framework must be resolved before the mission can be deemed a success.

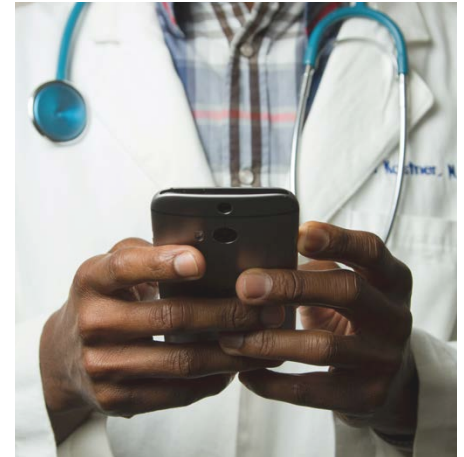


Image: National Cancer Institute / Unsplash

Key Takeaways

1

Streamlining health services in India via the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)

The NDHM integrates the existing digital health infrastructure and new tools to enable information flow across providers in the private and public sector. It will create a primary health platform and a united repository that is expected to streamline services, lower the cost of health and “optimize the health ecosystem through digital systems integration.”

2

The perils of the NDHM and the concerns around private data security

Advocacy groups have raised concerns about the risk of human rights breaches and the lack of informed consent provisions for patient data protection. Deliberate or accidental sharing of private data may result in the exposure of vulnerable groups or unfair advantages to insurance companies. The current regulatory system and the fragmented responsibility between central and union/state governments, further complicates monitoring of these risks.

3

Challenges to the infrastructure implementation and its community reach

The NDHM is already facing challenges in terms of ensuring the quality of the registration process and the proper maintenance of records. Limited broadband penetration and patient mobility also pose challenges for remote and rural communities' access. Further, it is unclear how the NDHM will resolve the financial, infrastructural, and logistical challenges that private sector healthcare providers face with respect to participation, particularly small clinics.

4

Future questions the NDHM must address for successful implementation in India

The NDHM is poised to provide a more inclusive and secure health service in India and position the country as a global leader in digital health. Yet, the NDHM will need to address several challenges in its design to address the social, financial, infrastructural, and logistical factors that may hamper its effective implementation.

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