

Next Generation e-Hospital: A Government National Informatics Centre (NIC) Initiative to Digitally Modernize Healthcare Services

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Sir,

On self-observing while working in the hospital and from feedback of public (patients) side always came in notice that there are several issues in hospitals like improper information, poor communication, incorrect identification of patient, improper communication among staff, unnecessary crowding and waiting, privacy issues and confusion in cost and billings. Many times, patient visited hospital for health consultation and were unsatisfied due to several unmanaged workflow within the hospital. The staff of hospital also exhausted in maintaining the routine records and challenges in retrieving files or records from medical record section. Also sometimes the record was not traceable due to disorganization, lost or damage caused by termites, water seepage, rat and many other factors. The problem originated and significant manpower and staff strength were engaged in doing some unproductive tasks which results in time wastage that reduced the efficiency.

To improve the hospital quality, efficiency and services, maintenance of records, bridge communication gaps, ensuring transparency, availability of data on virtual platform, the digitalization of data emerged as a practical solution. In this regard the Government of India started the digital India initiative to promote the use of advance computer technologies, AI based software applications, for easier workflow in the healthcare sector means digitalization of health sector.

The Digital India initiative is a top program started by the Government of India to digitalize the various sectors of Government department. The health sector is not untouched in this regard. The Digital India initiative launched by honorable Prime minister of India on July 1, 2015.^[1] For Hospital Management and Information System (HMIS) the Government introduced cloud based application name as Next Generation e-Hospital (NextGen eHospital) in all Government hospitals throughout India.

Next Generation e-hospital

The NextGen eHospital operates under the a digital India initiative of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) Government of India. The NextGen eHospital application is developed and performed by the NIC (National Informatics Centre) India. This application tries to connect patients, doctors, and hospital on a single digital platform.^[2] The NextGen eHospital created the real time patient data, availability of

consultants, availability of beds, digitalize the workflow of hospital, enhances transparency, improve efficiency, reduce paperwork, improves data accessibility and availability, enhance quality care and ensures compliance with ABDM (Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission).^[3] It also offers the services like online appointment, digital maintenance of health records via Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA). The NextGen eHospital has many module in their application like Patient Registration (OPD, IPD, Casualty), Online Registration System (ORS), IPD management (Admission, Discharge and Transfer), OPD and IPD clinics management, Queue management, Billing and Accounts, Pharmacy, Laundry, Radiology Information System (RIS), Laboratory Information System (LIS), Radiology Information System (RIS), Operation Theatre (OT) Management, dietary management, Store and inventory management, medical record management, ABHA integration.^[4]

Remarks

The next generation e- hospital application developed by National informatics Centre (NIC) under the digital India initiative program.^[5] This is actually a hospital management and information system that digitalize the workflow within hospital. For success and implementation of this NextGen eHospital application Government launched the website at <https://nextgen.ehospital.gov.in/home> and nominated the state wise regional coordinators, state informatics officers, state coordinators and nodal officers for e hospital with their contact details. All the Government hospitals including Ayurveda health care facility required to implement NextGen eHospital application with regards to digitalization of hospital services. In general it benefitted the patient, doctors, and hospitals. Simply starts from patient registration followed as clinical care (OPD, IPD, and Causality), laboratory care (LIS, RIS), pharmacy services, billings (accounts), etc. and finally discharge and reports of a patient.

On searching the next generation e hospital dashboard it shows 4642 hospitals are currently active on the platform along with details of ABHA registration, patient transaction, prescriptions generated, IPD, RIS etc. Several AYUSH hospitals adopting and utilizing the platform but exact verifiable report is not traced from available dashboard data.^[6]

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