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An Integrated Roadmap to Achieve Universal Health Care Policy Framework

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"Capitalizing on positive changes in healthcare Ã¢â?¬â?? from patient-centric innovations, fruitful partnerships, to greater primary care Ã¢â?¬â?? will enable the ecosystem to inch closer to a more sustainable and effective healthcare system", says Ruch de Silva, Senior Director, DKSH Patient & Payor Solutions



For many, accessing essential healthcare services can feel like navigating a complex maze with insurmountable obstacles. Major barriers range from proximity to care, affordability, culture, to lack of reliable information – leaving half our global population medically unattended and pushing many into poverty. Estimates by the World Health Organisation posit roughly 100 million people are surviving on just USD1.90 or less a day, owing to out-of-pocket healthcare expenses.

With this year's World Health Day themed "Health for All", this bodes the question: is achieving health for all possible?

Given inequitable access and poverty, this might seem like an unconquerable challenge. However, the rapid evolution of healthcare in recent years proves otherwise.

Within a few years, health systems globally leapfrogged into a digital era, giving rise to virtual care models and greater collaboration among stakeholders. Furthermore, post-pandemic healthcare reforms are effecting positive change in a range of areas – from improving healthcare resources, securing the healthcare supply chain, to changing the way healthcare is delivered altogether.

These developments have given rise to several trends, providing players in the ecosystem with an opportunity to turn effective and affordable care for all into reality.

Driving Patient-Centric Innovations

Digital transformation in healthcare is increasingly driving more people- and patient-centric innovations, breathing new life into the industry by empowering patients to take control of their own health with personalised, accessible, and effective solutions.

For instance, innovations in patient support programs are addressing more acute patient challenges beyond the primary care setting, including access, adherence, and convenience in care. Such programmes are ensuring the completeness of care through telemedicine, drug administration support, and lab tests to measure treatment, which can be coordinated in one platform.

When built with digital accessibility and diverse needs of patients in mind, such technology-driven solutions can make a fundamental difference in delivering inclusive care by reaching more patients. Stakeholders, therefore, have an opportunity to make great strides in designing impactful and equitable health technologies by engaging patients and practitioners in the co-creation process.

The public sector is also increasingly seeing the fruits of this patient-centric approach. An example is Taiwan's National Health Insurance Programme, which continues to achieve satisfaction rates of over 70%. The programme provides citizens with a health insurance scheme offering comprehensive medical services – comprising preventive care, outpatient care, inpatient care, and prescription drugs.

Ultimately, such programmes and innovations will bring us closer to addressing the challenges that impede the care of diverse populations.

Unlocking the Power of Partnerships:

In healthcare, it is rare for any organisation to own the full spectrum of care. This is further complicated by the fact that the pandemic has reset the way patients interact with healthcare providers, with higher expectations for personalisation and engagement.

This is where partnerships among players across the ecosystem can make an impact.

For example, the synergy of online and offline channels is creating a more holistic and enriching care experience. To that end, integrating in-person consultations with telehealth services is paving the way for the creation of an ecosystem that revolves around the continuum of care. This can make a massive impact in Southeast Asia, where some countries have a physician-to-population ratio of less than 10 physicians per 10,000 population count.

Opportunities for partnerships to improve healthcare are vast and diverse, going beyond traditional or governmental organisations. Nascent industries, such as HealthTech and InsurTech, can greatly reap the benefits of partnering with established players to accelerate distribution and facilitate reach.

Renewing the Focus on Primary Care:

Capable of managing 90% of healthcare demands, primary care is a cost-effective way to address comprehensive health needs, strengthen the resilience of health systems, and achieve health for all in an inclusive and equitable manner.

For instance, timely and appropriate primary care holds significant potential in reducing the chronic disease burden. Regular monitoring and management can prevent or delay the onset of life-changing complications. Taking the example of type 2 diabetes, this can include prevention of end-stage renal disease and amputations.

In Asia Pacific, there is a pressing need to rethink primary care delivery, given it holds one of the weakest primary healthcare systems globally.

The good news is that the region is poised to make a change. This means leveraging digital platforms and virtual care models to connect public and private resources, engage communities, and extend reach to the last mile.

Singapore is a prime example of a country that is embracing this change, shifting the center of gravity in healthcare from acute hospitals to the community. Its Healthier SG programme is rooted in a new approach that moves away from treating ailments reactively, toward more modern and preventative ways that ward off diseases before they become systemic.

This shift will ultimately see improved healthcare outcomes by way of financial policies and incentives, engagement with community partners, and patient-centred care plans.

Achieving Health for All:

Achieving Health for All must be a shared goal that requires dedication and collaboration from all players to evolve and stretch the potential of emerging care models and solutions. Further capitalising on positive changes in healthcare – from patient-

centric innovations, fruitful partnerships, to greater primary care – will enable the ecosystem to inch closer to a more sustainable and effective healthcare system.

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