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Telecom services to boom in APAC healthcare sector: Report

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Singapore: Telecommunication companies in Asia-Pacific are increasingly exploring vertical markets like healthcare to open up new revenue streams as the market holds great potential for telecommunication service providers owing to the large size and diverse healthcare issues across countries, according to a report by Frost and Sullivan.

The active participation of all industry stakeholders towards driving technology adoption in healthcare, along with government initiatives to improve efficiency and resource utilization, will have a profound impact on uptake.

According to Frost & Sullivan's report, Global Assessment of Telecommunications Service Providers in Healthcare, although the industry presents promising opportunities, few telecommunication service providers have been able to establish successful business models in this space. Whereas traditional telecom services have achieved strong penetration in the healthcare industry, more sophisticated solutions are only now starting to generate returns and have a long way to go in terms of enabling a new-age healthcare system.

In addition to innovative service offerings telecommunication providers within the region are also turning to the west for ideas as they struggle to develop and communicate a compelling healthcare business strategy. Competition too is brewing as several leading multinational telecommunications companies look to expand their footprint into emerging Asia-Pacific markets.

"Communication service providers are opportunistic in that they seek out products and services that are comparatively easier to monetize based on government priorities and reimbursement policies in the region," commented Ms Natasha Gulati,

connected health senior analyst, Frost & Sullivan. "Such products and services lay the foundation for sustainable revenues while more innovative pilot projects, such as telehealth networks for rural areas or mHealth-based educational programs, are tactics to underline their presence in healthcare as well as demonstrate the need for technology adoption."

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Telecommunications companies are also partnering with universities to gain access to turnkey projects. For instance, British Telecom signed a deal with the General Hospital of Ningxia Medical University in China to offer healthcare IT consultancy services.

"Building an ecosystem of services is the key to success," advised Ms Gulati. "The ideal strategy is to create a network of partners that includes software vendors, mobile app companies, medical device companies, pharmaceutical participants and hospital chains, among others, that can deliver holistic solutions to consumers in the Asia-Pacific market."