

National e-Health Authority (NeHA)

1) Introduction

- National e-Health Authority (NeHA) is a regulatory and standards setting organization to guide and support India's journey in e-Health
- NeHA will be the nodal authority that will be responsible for development of an Integrated Health Information System in India, while collaborating with all the stakeholders, viz., healthcare providers, consumers, healthcare technology industries, and policymakers.
- It will also be responsible for enforcing the laws & regulations relating to the privacy and security of the patients health information & records.

2) Need for NeHA

- Technology can play an enabling role in addressing the issue of absence of qualified service delivery personnel in remote areas
- improving the efficiency of the healthcare system and also in improving the quality of care
- To promote e-Health and Tele-medicine/remote healthcare/virtual healthcare and such other measures.
- To promote setting up of state health records repositories and health information exchanges (HIEs).
- regulation and accelerated adoption of e-health in the country by public and private care providers

3) Use of ICT in the Indian Healthcare System

- effective sharing of information between healthcare participants
- Electronic Health Record (EHR) and the ability to exchange health information electronically can help the providers to extend higher quality and safer care for patients
- Diagnostic accuracy, reduced waiting times, better referral management and greater satisfaction with services.
- SMS-based services, live and asynchronous telemedicine, and interactive voice response service (IVRS).
- Help formation of technological solutions .Ex. Health Apps for vaccination reminders etc.
- Digitisation will ensure that health history and status of all patients would always be available to all health institutions. Hence avoid repeated medical tests & reduce paperwork.
- This would also expedite diagnosis and treatment.
- It would also be a repository of full health information that can be processed to generate epidemiological data on a massive scale.
- With growing incidence of drug resistance, access to patient's information can be vital.

4) International Experience

- Canada was one of the earliest to start in 2002 to lead the development and implementation of electronic health projects
- U.K., Australia and Singapore have been other prominent countries who have taken initiatives for setting up nationwide e-Health
- In Singapore, the National e-Policy to promote the use of ICT across all sectors has been extremely effective
- In Singapore the regulations to protect the privacy and security of individual patient data where e-Health is used are rated as very effective.

5) challenges

- The poor uptake of electronic records by doctors in India
- the lack of inter-operability between systems and devices
- legitimate concern for privacy, security and safety of medical data
- Health information going public can cause damage to reputation with regard to disease with which social stigmas are attached like mental health, fertility, HIV etc.
- Sharing patient information without his permission will be breach of trust.

6) What needs to be done?

- To get doctors to adopt electronic medical records (EMRs), any proposed systems must be easy to use and affordable.
- Careful attention must be paid to human-centered design and data minimisation (collecting only the data you need)
- Substantial intellectual rigour must be devoted to building safeguards to protect the most vulnerable — the patients.
- Passing privacy laws in sync with these new technologies can usher in an era of unprecedented growth in the scope, quality and safety of Indian healthcare.

7) Why e-Health is a key pillar of Digital India

- **Access to Products/ Information/ Knowledge**
 - a) Through Internet a patient today is able to learn about their condition, treatment options, best practices how best to manage it better
- **Access to health services**
 - a) Through e-Pharmacy, e-Diagnostics, e-Insurance etc, consumers in different parts of the country can access medication at their doorstep
 - b) deep rooted issues of middlemen taking commission to procure medicines is addressed
 - c) Across the country, an online model to procure health services ensures everything is tracked, recorded and hence organized and operated in a professional manner
- **Access to experts/ doctors**
 - a) The internet can create access to qualified specialists and doctors whom a consumer would otherwise not be able to physically access.
 - b) Through telemedicine, a village dweller in the heart of India can access a top specialist anywhere through the digital connect.
- **Transparency**
 - a) Online models for healthcare ensure there is all the information available at the patient's fingertips.

8) Conclusion

- Digitization of health services can have long term benefit at a time when public health spending is less than 2% GDP and more than 60% expenditure is out of pocket.
- A digital health Greenfield, robust telecom infrastructure, unique ID authentication, and a large talented pool of IT professionals are all present.
- Utilising them may allow India to shape healthcare delivery globally.