

A UNIQUE VIRTUAL NGO

The Internet has increased productivity manifold, created new businesses and also created new business models. It has revolutionized the healthcare sector in several ways. It has done so by providing information quickly & easily, electronic health record systems, e-training tool for doctors, e-counseling sessions for patients etc.

The Cloud Revolution

Digitization in the field of healthcare & the use of Cloud based computing is also revolutionizing the healthcare in India by providing a national electronic health record management system, telemedicine in rural areas with limited resources, a centralized patient medical history system, remote patient monitoring to extend the healthcare services can extend beyond the boundaries of the hospital, drug manufacturers updated post-marketing surveillance data to the drug manufacturers on their products, online inventory management system for pharmacies & product marketing companies. Indian Government has started using Cloud to benefit masses and launched massive projects like Aadhar, National Population Register, National Rural Health Mission, M-NREGA.

Social Media & Information Dissemination

In India, the social media is being used increasingly to create awareness, spread information quickly & easily. According to a report published by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) (2013), the number of social media users in urban India reached 58 million (Mn) in June 2012 and 66 Mn by June 2013. Essentially, about 74% of all active Internet users in urban India use social media. The report interestingly states, that of the urban social networking base of 58 Mn, about 20.3 Mn (or 35%) are from small towns (towns having population of upto 5 Lakhs). This highlights the reach of the Internet & social media in India. Facebook is the leading website accessed by 97% of all social media users in India. A McKinsey report states that there will be 330 million Indians on the Internet in 2015, making it the 2nd largest connected population in the world. Thus, the internet and the social media can be used as a powerful tool to spread awareness and share information quickly.

Barriers & Challenges

However, there are still major barriers that need to be addressed for the digitization in the field of healthcare to reach its true potential. Some of the barriers include: financial sustainability, lack of digitization of medical records and citizen data, privacy and confidentiality concerns, government policies and mandates, technical problems, stakeholder competition concerns, and accuracy of patient data.

DFL INTRO

Inspired by the revolution & the reach of the internet in India, www.dependencefreelife.org a website of the NGO – Dependence Free Life (DFL) Foundation was conceived with the vision of connecting patients dependent on drug, alcohol and smoking to a qualified doctor in the city. This is a pilot project launched in Mumbai and will soon be launched in all the cities across India. Since the launch of the website on March 23, 2013, some interesting statistics generated are as follows:

In 43 days since the launch, DFL has....

- **Facebook NGO supporters:** 6,273
- **Website visitors:** 9,921
- **Top 3 countries from where the visitors are coming:** India, USA, Finland
- **Top 7 areas in India from where visitors are coming:** Mumbai, Pune, New Delhi, Navi Mumbai, Thane, Kalyan, Mira Bhayander.
- **Top 3 most visited pages on Site:** Patient Registration Form, Parents Section, Test Your Dependence Level
- **Registered patients on website:** 39
- **Dependence Level Test taken :**
 - **Total:** 684 (Female: 34 [0.05%]; Male: 650 [99.95%])
 - Total number of teenagers (age 13-1) taking the test : 76
 - **Smoking:** 315 (46% of Total test takers)
 - Average Score: 3.1; Low Level of addiction
 - 42 teenagers (age 13-19) have taken the test with an average score of : 3.4 which is a low level of addiction)
 - **Alcohol:** 261 (38% of Total test takers)
 - Average Score: 13.3; Moderate to High Level of addiction
 - 22 teenagers (age 13-19) have taken the test with an average score of : 11 which is a moderate to high level of addiction
 - **Drugs:** 108 (16% of Total test takers)
 - Average Score: 3.7; Moderate Level of addiction
 - 12 teenagers (age 13-19) have taken the test with an average score of : 3.5 which moderate level of addiction

The DFL website not only serves as a bridge between the patient and the doctor but also serves as a medium through which patients, parents and doctors can get information related to addiction quickly.

PATIENT SECTION

Anonymous, 24/7, Confidential

Considering the Indian culture, traditions and the social stigma attached to addiction, people are seeking information from all stratas of the society and age groups which require the medium of information dissemination to be anonymous and confidential. This gives them the confidence to seek the information and eventually consider treatment. The DFL website understands this need of the information/treatment seekers and thus in it's patient registration form asks for no personal identifying information (unless provided voluntarily). Post-registration a unique patient identity (DFL ID) is generated which then becomes the identifying information of the patient for the doctor. Confidentiality of the information generated through the website on the patient's treatment history is given high priority and is not disclosed to any third party.

In order to ensure patient compliance and continuous treatment, bringing convenience and location accessibility to the patients is of paramount importance. The website helps the patient to locate a doctor at a location convenient to them and this information is available on the website 24/7.

What Information are the Patient's Looking for?

Upon conducting a survey, DFL found out that the patients are primarily looking for information on the following topics:

- Comprehensive Information on Addiction: Patients are looking for information on the what are the stages of addiction, commonly abused drugs and diseases associated with such forms of addiction. The website has consolidated such key information and provides it to the patient.
- Medications: Most of the patients are not aware that there is medical treatment available for addiction. The website educates the patients by providing them detailed information on the different medicines currently approved for the treatment of addiction.
- Test the Dependence Level: The website provide an anonymous self-assessment tool like the 'The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test' (AUDIT) (designed by the W.H.O.) for the patients where they can test their dependence level. This can help them evaluate the need to seek treatment.
- Treatment Locator: Finally, the patients are looking for information on where they can find treatment and the website's 'Treatment Locator' tool helps the patient to do just that. A short doctor appointment form allows the patient to book an appointment with the doctor and register for treatment.

Armed, with all the information which is available through our information, the patient can get connected to our website.

DOCTOR SECTION

Patient Prescription and Treatment History Management System

Today, through the digitization in the field of healthcare, the doctors now have faster access to more accurate and consolidated information on their patients. Understanding this need of the doctors, DFL wanted to provide a comprehensive tool through the website for the doctors, which would be a fool proof interface to manage the patient's treatment history. With the help of digitization, DFL is able to help a doctor manage a patient's prescription online, the patient's treatment history which includes: patient's former medical history, commonly abused drugs, current dosage, withdrawal symptoms, drug-drug interactions, side effects and a remark section where doctor can record any abnormal events that the patient experiences during the course of the treatment. This data is used to generate an online patient progress report which is shared with both the doctor and the patient.

Since, the website is virtual and the patients travel to other cities for work and holidays, through the patient's DFL account, he can find a participating DFL doctor in that city. Upon patient consent, the new doctor is able to access the patient's treatment history and give him the right dose which is absolutely critical for drug addiction treatment. This convenience of getting uninterrupted treatment even while the patient is travelling is only possible through the internet and digitization of patient records.

E-Training Module for Doctors

In India, very few doctors are properly trained or qualified to treat addiction which requires both patient counseling and medical treatment. The internet serves as a perfect tool to reach out to maximum number of doctors, even in rural area and train doctors. This will increase the number of qualified doctors in the country and treatment points in the country. In partnership with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (A.I.I.M.S; New Delhi), which is one of the Government of India (GOI) certified institutes for training doctors for addiction treatment in the country, DFL is developing an e-training module to train the doctors. This will be an interactive module with video training sessions for counseling and diagnosing the patients, effective management of the side effects and withdrawal symptoms, latest trends in treatment, FAQs etc. The e-training module would also consist of an online e-test and an e-certification process which will be recognized by the GOI.