

'Need for framework to handle e-medical records'

STAFF REPORTER
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India needs to take urgent steps to formulate a detailed legal framework to maintain and handle electronic medical and health records, said Safdarjung Hospital Medical Superintendent Rajendra Sharma.

He was speaking at the ASSOCHAM conference here on 'Health Security for All: Transforming Healthcare'.

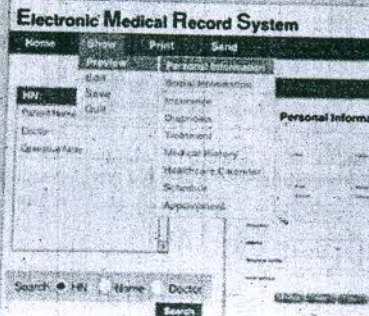
He said stringent parameters for legal framework to protect privacy in e-health records will go a long way in protecting patients and their data, as also their respective handling in the hands of medical and health related industries. R.N. Kalra of Kalra Hospital urged the government to declare zero tolerance for violence against doctors.

Use of electronic medical record must: Experts

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Saying that majority of hospitals and clinics still run on paper-based systems and have no centralised system to store medical records, Dr Rajendra Sharma, Medical Superintendent (MS), Safdarjung Hospital, on Wednesday, said hospitals in India require a regulatory framework that mandates and regulates the use of Electronic Medical Records (ERMs) and Hospital Information System (HIS).

While inaugurating a con-



ference on 'Health Security for All', organised by ASSOCHAM, he said this system will aid in

all aspects of healthcare planning, delivery, and monitoring, including disease surveillance,

patient medical records, planning for human resources, continuing medical education, facility registration, and telemedicine initiatives and a national policy is being considered for the same.

"The citizens of India will benefit from an integrated health information system across all states. A national policy for the implementing the same is also being considered. Such systems are presently being adapted by larger central referral hospitals like Safdarjung Hospital and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)"

said Dr Sharma. The same has also been envisaged as priority area in the National Health Policy 2017, he added.

According to Dr Rajendra Sharma and others, the first step in the process of technology adoption will be to capture all patient health information at the point of care, especially hospitals and clinics. This information may then be shared with health information exchanges where it can be accessed easily by doctors and hospitals.

The next critical step will be to ensure that the data is uniformly captured, interpreted and accessed by all those concerned. And, given the sensitive nature of patient health information data safety is the other vital concern, he said.

Listing some of its benefits, he said it will save duplication of tests, the associated costs and precious time, in instances where minutes can make a difference between life and death. Also, it will make a fundamental shift in thinking of people who prefer private sector over public sector due to various reasons.

"These problems in Indian

health care system includes lack of trust, the modern society is progressively losing the trust in the healthcare service be it the doctors, hospitals or labs. Part of this problem is due to increased costs which make a negative outcome doubtful and the other part is because of a significant part of healthcare delivery chain is under regulated" said Dr Sharma.

People are also wary of government health institutions due to the large crowds and unmatched resources for the larger population base, he said that reducing the out-of-pocket expense on healthcare is likely to address this problem and the nation may see it in time with the roll-out of the Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission of universal health insurance, DR Sharma added.

He said that there is a significant emphasis in the government trying to increase the health outlay but the problems remain in the implementation of schemes, primarily due to lack of trained manpower and inability of the society to bear the higher cost associated with better level of training.