



PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY HEALTHCARE THROUGH IT

Delivering world-class medical services has always been the primary goal of healthcare providers around the world, including Asia. However, achieving this goal proves to be difficult as these healthcare providers have to face fierce competition among other providers, increased regulatory requirements, rising costs, and growing patient expectations.

James Smith, Managing Editor of FutureGov Magazine recently interviewed Dr. Kenneth Thean, Vice-President for IT at Parkway Health and Advisor for Pantai Hospitals, and Andy David, a Healthcare Industry Principal for Asia Pacific and Japan to find out how IT can help healthcare providers overcome the abovementioned challenges.

Data Collection and High-Quality Healthcare

Data collection in hospitals is an increasing necessity to help doctors deliver high-quality

healthcare to their patients. The more data that a hospital has on a particular patient, the better the care can be provided for them.

These data come from disparate sources within the hospital, including medical systems, laboratory systems, and pharmacy systems. The collected data provides greater insight and transparency to doctors who can then make informed decisions using these data, thereby reducing risks in the treatment of a patient.

Aside from decision-making and reducing risks, the information that is collected can also help doctors detect problems early. This applies not only to particular cases in patients and the hospital as a whole, but it may also hint at regional problems such as pandemics.

David uses the example of how New York City utilised IT and information

gathering during the H1N1 outbreak in the United States. During this time, there was a daily feed of information to map out which areas of the city have breakouts, areas that may need extra resources, and even see where a breakout was going to hit next.

“If we find a certain bug coming up more often than previously, the systems could actually flag it up much earlier than you can notice,” adds Dr Thean.

More than Just Assessing Risk

The data collected also provides decision-makers a bird’s eye view of everything, beyond merely assessing risk. Through IT, these decision-makers could also analyse the data easier so they can assess which healthcare trends work, thereby ensuring that they provide patients with better quality healthcare.

However, coming up with a standardised and centralised approach to the application of the collected data can be difficult. Reasons for this include the hospital’s use of both legacy and newer systems, as well as the fact that the data often come from different resources that use different standards. These reasons make it difficult for doctors to analyse and interpret these data easily.

The solution is to make the interface user-friendly through the use of graphs and a dashboard that presents all essential data in one place. That way, hospital managers and doctors can make sense of the data that has been collected.

“You’ve got to present [the data] in graphs, charts, and easy-to-understand tables,” said Dr Thean. Aside from that, a dashboard could also inform doctors of what happened in the hospital in the last 12

hours that the doctor wasn’t there, added David.

Addressing Compliance Issues with the Government

Currently, complying with certain government regulations is quite difficult for hospitals, often requiring a huge amount of time and paperwork. IT eases the burden of compliance to regulations by facilitating how the required data is collected and sent to the government.

According to Dr Thean, compliance is an area where IT works best. “The computer just aggregates all the data for you, and turns out the report which you can send electronically to the government. In that sense, IT is a great enabler for them,” he said.

Facilitating risk-compliance in hospitals are quite new in Asia, said David. However, he said he thinks that it’s an area

where hospitals can truly benefit from.

The Challenge of becoming a World-Class Healthcare Provider

It is not enough, however, for healthcare providers to simply be able to collect data easily. David said that for a healthcare provider to be truly world-class, the data should be utilised, “on a daily and minute-by-minute basis.”

Meanwhile, Dr Thean said that high-quality hospitals are those that provide high-quality healthcare using best practices in the healthcare industry. Doing so would ensure that patients get exactly what they need at the appropriate time, as well as to monitor the progress of their health.

Aside from providing high-quality healthcare, IT can also take care of some of the tasks in a hospital, such as



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providing accurate billing, said Thean. He added that IT could help make things faster, more efficient, and less repetitive in the hospital setting.

The Challenges Ahead

Implementing these changes in a hospital can be difficult as through the experience of Dr Thean, “You’re actually trying to introduce new technology to staff, some of whom are not used to using computers.” The management of the transition process can therefore prove difficult.

There’s also the time factor. Implementing these changes takes time, said Dr Thean, “but you’ve got to go through the pain of the process.”

David suggested that in order to facilitate the transition, users should be able to see how they benefit from the new technology. “If they don’t see the benefit, they won’t use the system and they won’t input the data.”

To overcome the time factor, David also suggested showing a quick benefit to the users. “If you can show the doctor or the nurse that by entering that data, they can then achieve a second step which they could never do before, then you’re on a roll and they will continue to take on that change management.” <

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