

health right now

## Health Buzz 2012

We're facing new challenges every day—increase in our health burden; rapid growth in the number of people suffering from diabetes, cardiac problems and cancers; drug resistance and emergence of new diseases. But there's some good news too. New and improved technology and drugs are obviously one. The other is the slow but steady rise in the awareness about patient-centric care.

### Customisation of Diagnosis, Care and Cure



Diagnosis and treatment is quickly moving away from population averages and historic patterns, thanks to the advances in genetic mapping and the growing knowledge base in medicine. Says Dr Ajay Bakshi, CEO, Max Healthcare, "The individual and his molecular make-up can be used to predict predisposition to certain diseases, allow early detection and predict reactions to specific

drugs, making prevention and/or treatment more effective and individual-centric." This is also cost-effective. "You can take proactive steps in prevention, plus identify ineffective treatments," Bakshi adds.

### Patients' Charter of Rights

How many times have you had that nagging doubt about the battery of tests that were ordered, the long list of meds prescribed or the expensive procedures suggested? And what about the bill which seemed grossly inflated? For reasons like these, the health sector is coming under severe scrutiny. In fact,

the Planning Commission's new panel on healthcare, the National Health Regulatory and Development Authority (NHRDA) will monitor and enforce essential healthcare regulations to control entry, quality, quantity and price. The NHRDA (headed by *Prevention* advisor Dr K Srinath Reddy) will oversee and enforce the rationality of services and costs with clear payment norms too. "The AMRI fire incident, if anything, is an eye-opener for all hospitals. What is not right for the patient can't



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remain. If the medical community doesn't wake up to its responsibilities, other bodies will naturally regulate it," says Dr Devi Shetty, philanthropist, cardiac surgeon and chairman, Narayana Hrudayalaya, Bengaluru. Stay tuned in to know your rights.

**e-Health**  
Modern information and communication technologies have revolutionised healthcare practice and systems. Upload your family's medical reports that can be accessed 24x7 by your doctor. Diabetic? Register online and get your diabetes management plan and timely reminders to help you keep track of your blood sugar levels. Search the Net and you will find several health apps you can download on your mobile phone. Your health is literally in your hands. "I am very optimistic about the mobile phone revolu-

tion. You will soon see your smart phone convert to a glucometer, an ECG machine and even an ultrasound machine," says Shetty, one of the pioneers of telemedicine. Looking for more? How about an e-hospital? Yes, you can now consult specialists in your living room. Sample this: take a picture of the irritating rash on your arm, upload it along with info on related symptoms on a website and get diagnosed by a specialist online. Cool, convenient, time-saving? "Medical logistics is still a big issue. On an average, people travel 50 km to consult a specialist and sometimes over 100 km to consult a cancer specialist, and even after that appointments may not be available immediately, or worse, may not even have been necessary," says Dr Arbinder Singal,

urologist, formerly with AIIMS and co-founder and director of MediAngels, India's first e-super speciality hospital. E-hospitals can help address the challenges in dealing with increasing chronic lifestyle diseases, reduce steep hospital bills, encourage patient information, offer diagnostic services and second opinions (with specialists in the country as well as abroad).  
Welcome, future!  
—Kathakoli Dasgupta

