Patient data protection key during COVID-19: Experts at IIHMR University, webinar

Patient data protection key during COVID-19: Experts at IIHMR Univ webinar

By EH News Bureau — On Sep 6, 2020

NEWS | HEALTHCARE IT | PUBLIC HEALTH

Speakers highlighted "tensions between individualised approach based on clinical needs and duties to the wider population to minimise harm and maximise benefits" during COVID-19 era

Highlighting that patient data confidentiality due to the use of medical assistants such as artificial intelligence (AI) can create a conflict of interest situation in healthcare settings, Prof Ashish Chandra, University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL), Houston, Texas, said, "We are in the digital era where medical assistants support quality reporting with electronic health records and services. They have been around for decades, but in the era of COVID-19, medical assistants are being used more now than ever before. Hence, it is increasingly important for healthcare organisations to have a regulatory and policy framework for all data services to maintain patients' fundamental privacy rights. It is also important for organisations to get better health infrastructure for patients and to deliver better care. This will also help maintain the relations between physicians, nurses, healthcare leaderships, management, and patients."

Prof Chandra, along with Prof William (Bill) Stroube, Professor, Health Services Administration, University of Evansville, US, and Dr P R Sodani, Pro President, IIHMR University, was speaking at the webinar on "The Underappreciated Value of Healthcare Ethics – A Look at Various Cases," organised by IIHMR University. Many healthcare systems have the principle of making the care of individual patients the primary concern, and India needs the same, Prof Chandra said. The observation becomes important as India attempts to move to a more digital healthcare system through the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM).

Taking this argument forward, Prof Stroube said, "There are many moral issues that arise out of the provision of health care—from those that are inherent in the relationship between the healthcare professional and the patient to those associated with many ethical dimensions, from the consequential ethics (based on the theory of right and wrong) to deontological ethics (duty-based). During a pandemic, there are tensions between this individualised approach based on clinical needs and duties to the wider population to minimise harm and maximise benefits. To clarify the unappreciated moral issues of healthcare, a multisystem ethical culture and organisational culture may provide a policy framework to make better quality decisions concerning patients."

Commenting on physicians' changing role in light of the pandemic, Dr Sodani emphasised, "While the increased use of medical assistants in many patient-care tasks makes sense, the future role of the physician in sectors like primary care needs greater clarification. Strong doctor-patient relationships are essential to improving the quality of care, the patient experience, physician job satisfaction, and overall functioning of the healthcare team."