PRESS RELEASE

COVID19 sees surge in Remote Consultations by doctors: Ipsos Survey

New Delhi, July 01, 2020: According to a new survey by Ipsos among Healthcare Professionals (HCPs), almost 95% of the Indian doctors polled claimed to be providing Remote Consultations to their patients. This was a sharp increase from the status pre- COVID19 and reiterates the larger trend of digital adoption by HCPs in their practice.

Interestingly, the consulting modes used by a physician during the COVID lockdown underwent a major change during the COVID19 lockdown with more consultations happening via remote techniques (52% patients) versus those seen face to face (48%). Among the remote consultations, 30% were telephonic consultation, 16% were online consultations via video conferencing/ WhatsApp and 6% via SMS.

Notably, the pre-COVID19 scenario was completely different, where face to face patient consultations on an average per physician stood at 75%, while remote consultations constituted 25% (13% telephonic; 7% online via video conferencing/ WhatsApp and SMS was 5%). In fact, post-COVID19 also, about 90% of the doctors would continue providing remote consultations, with the online/ WA mode slated to see the highest jump; 69% doctors expecting to use it in the future (vs 59 using it pre COVID19).

Effectiveness of Remote Consultations

70% of doctors polled reposed their faith in remote consultations and deemed it as an effective medium for consultation.

Key Challenges faced by doctors during COVID19

Doctors polled cited a host of challenges faced by them during COVID19: **Starting a new patient on a new therapy (58%); switching an existing patient to a different therapy (54%); keeping appointments on schedule (51%); getting reimbursed for patient appointments (50%); collecting consultation fees (50%); ordering a test (48%); managing patient appointments (48%); doing the correct diagnosis (48%) and booking patients for their next appointment (45%).**

Doctors perception of COVID 19

Interestingly, majority of the doctors even after four months of the pandemic, were uncertain

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and lacked sufficient knowledge about COVID19. While 55% were unsure whether it was a single outbreak or a seasonal infection, 29% called it a single outbreak and 16% felt it was a seasonal infection. Further, doctors gave the virus an average of 11 months' timeframe, before it could be brought under control (presuming the vaccine is developed by then).

The online quantitative study was conducted by Ipsos in partnership with Global Survey among 150 Healthcare Practitioners (43 general practitioners and 107 with other specialties like consulting physicians, cardiologists, pediatricians, oncologists, obstetricians and gynecologists, diabetologists and endocrinologists, orthopaedicians, etc. The cities covered in the survey included the big cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad, and the smaller cities of Ahmedabad, Indore, Lucknow, Nagpur, Nashik, Nellore and Pune.

Ipsos Digital Doctor 2020

Ipsos Digital Doctor 2020 survey, (3rd in the series of a global connected health track study conducted by Ipsos since 2015) conducted **Pre-COVID19** among doctors in 21 countries (including India) showed high levels of awareness among Indian and global doctors for digital healthcare technologies. Though interestingly we found a huge disparity among doctors between awareness versus knowledge and usage of digital healthcare technologies.

98% Indian doctors claimed to be aware of telemedicine/ telehealth, while only 65% had the knowledge; remote patient monitoring (89% awareness; 43% knowledge); AI (90% awareness; 36% knowledge) and robotics (85% awareness; 40% knowledge). Among those with good knowledge of telemedicine, only 27% used telemedicine/ telehealth. **Lack of training, no govt. policy, limited technology infrastructure and internet issues in the country were voiced as the key barriers towards adoption of telehealth.**

The survey also showed higher usage of Connected Health Devices (like wearable, sensors) by primary care physicians for supporting clinical decisions.

Monica Gangwani, Country Service Line Leader and Executive Director, Healthcare, Ipsos India *predicts acceleration in long term technology adoption in Healthcare, "Digital and Connected Health Devices will be the mainstay during the active COVID19 phase and will continue to grow at a fast pace post COVID19. Likewise, Virtual Medical Channels are a repository of information for doctors and these too will witness higher penetration levels as the primary source of information."*

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