

UAE



Continuing rise of chronic illnesses combined with an ageing population makes remote healthcare necessary.

Remote healthcare will grow in the next two years, says expert

SHARJAH

Most patients' treatment takes place outside the hospital. Therefore there is an urgent need to bridge the gap

Remote healthcare has been projected to widen at least in the next two years.

The reason, according to Dr. Anas Nofal, is the continuing rise of chronic illnesses combined with the ageing populations worldwide: "The dramatic increase of chronic diseases in a growing and ageing world population has exacerbated issues. As chronic diseases rise across the world, the demand for remote care, supported by digital health, will grow in the future."

Chronic diseases are considered to be lifetime as these run the course of at least one year which normally limit one's mobility and functions.

Meanwhile, the University of Washington (USA)-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (which deals with "global health statistics and impact evaluation," released its "11 Global Health Issues to Watch in 2023" in December 2022.

These 11 are burdensome, particularly to the poor and developing nations, according to its researchers and scientists namely Professor Moshen Naghavi, Assistant Professor Hwme Kyu and Angela Micah, Affiliate Professor

Michael Brauer, Affiliate Assistant Professor Alize Ferrari, lead research scientists Liane Ong and Sarah Wulf Hanson, postdoctoral scholars Christian Razo and Ewerton Cousin, and researcher Emma Nichols.

While it has been widely accepted that the co-related obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular concerns, and cancers are the chronic diseases for the longest time, they had ranked cardiovascular diseases and diabetes at fourth and eighth respectively. Road accidents which may lead to partial or complete paralysis is one notch lower from diabetes.

On the list are health issues connected to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) with Long/Chronic COVID the number one: "Long COVID is absolutely a health issue to watch in 2023 (that) disrupts a person's ability to engage with school, work, or relationships for months at a time. (He) needs diagnostic and proper rehabilitation support from primary care physicians."

The second health concern to watch out for is mental health, sometimes resulting in suicide and which had been discovered not only due to poverty but also entrenched in "childhood

sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, and bullying victimisation," horrendously affecting the sufferers way through their adulthood.

Correlated to the booming and ageing population is dementia which is not a mental illness and which the experts said its "interventions targeting modifiable risk factors such as low education, smoking, and high blood sugar, have the potential to reduce the overall societal burden and should be prioritised."

Axios International (health consultancy) managing partner Nofal said: "Where do patients go when they need care and treatment? Where do they go after being diagnosed with a chronic disease? Many of us would immediately think of a hospital or a medical facility. However, that can be costly, and may not ultimately satisfy the patient as it could involve a long wait."

"Remote care is a new focus of care outside traditional settings required to effectively provide access to patients with chronic diseases and those needing long-term care," continued the former clinical instructor at the International Academy for Health Sciences in Saudi Arabia and the Al-Balqa Applied University in Jordan.

Repeating the possible long-waiting time which makes remote care more practical and more patient-centred, Nofal said: "Healthcare needs to focus on advancing medicine farther with the tools and resources to observe, record and monitor the medical services and medicines being provided have the desired outcome."

It was an answer too, to how critical it is to go remote when medical science and technology are aggressively advancing. He also said: "Hospital settings are designed to treat patients but not to monitor chronic diseases which can be done aptly through remote care."

Nofal went on to say: "Today, healthcare systems are overwhelmed and centred around hospitals and processes. While modernising health facilities is required, more action is necessary to manage patients who need prolonged or chronic treatment. Most patients' treatment journey takes place outside the hospital. Therefore there is an urgent need to close the gap between existing healthcare systems and the changing patient needs which we do through remote care."

Mariecar Jara-Puyod, Senior Reporter