

UPSC EDITORIAL ANALYSIS 18 JUN 2021

EDITORIAL 1: A PLACE FOR DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA'S HEALTH SECTOR

Topic: General Studies Paper-2 (Health Sector)

Context:

- During the pandemic, frontline warriors and the medical community have been selfless in serving the public, at the same time they lost a number of staff in the process.
- Nurses and attendants, on full-time duty, had only masks and gloves as their protective gear and were exposed to great risk.
- It is in such a situation that the relevance of disruptive technology and its applications comes to use and it helps reduce the chances of hospital staff contracting the infection.



Use of technology:

- In some innovative field hospitals, robots were used to take care of COVID-19 affected patients.
- In China, hospitals use 5G-powered temperature measurement devices to flag patients who have fever/fever-like symptoms. Robots measure heart rates and blood oxygen levels through smart bracelets and rings that patients wear.

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- Robots also sanitise wards and last year, in India, the Sawai Man Singh government hospital in Jaipur held trials with a humanoid robot to deliver medicines and food to COVID-19 patients admitted there.
- Thus technology should be used to improve the welfare of societies and reduce the impact of communicable diseases.
- Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous systems, blockchain, cloud and quantum computing, data analytics, 5G. Blockchain technology can help in addressing the interoperability of Health information by providing a complete indexed history of all medical data, including formal medical records and health data from mobile applications and wearable sensors.
- Big data analytics can help in early disease detection and provide early treatment to public.
- Also, hospital health-care facilities can be improved using AI and the Internet of Medical Things.
- IoMT is defined as a connected infrastructure of medical devices, software applications, and health systems and services which shapes health-care applications.
- Medical autonomous systems can improve medical care delivery in dispersed and complex environments with the help of technologies. Autonomous critical care system, intubation, autonomous cricothyrotomy and other autonomous interventional procedures will help to improve health sector.
- Use of Cloud computing would facilitate collaboration and data exchanges between doctors, departments, institutions and medical providers to enable best treatment.

Furthering UHC

- According to the World Health Organization “Universal health coverage (UHC) is the best policy to take care of public health.
- UHC is a powerful social equalizer and the ultimate expression of fairness.
- We need to explore how UHC can be achieved through the application of digital technologies, led by a robust strategy integrating human, financial, organisational and technological resources.
- According to WHO research, weakly-coordinated steps may lead to stand-alone and fragmentation of information resulting in poor delivery of care.
- India needs to create its own digital health strategy that works towards universal health coverage and person-centred care.
- There is a need to create a strategy that is ethically appropriate, crosses the digital divide, and ensures inclusion across the economy. ‘Ayushman Bharat’ and ICT Communication tools could be fine-tuned with this strategy to promote ways to protect populations.
- Online consultation through video conferencing during times of transmission of communicable diseases would help to reduce the risk exposure of frontline warriors.

Using local knowledge

- Along with technology we need to use local knowledge .
- Community nurses, doctors, and health workers can act as Frontline sentinels in developing countries.
- For example , During the Ebola virus outbreak in Africa,communities proactively helped curtail the spread much before government health teams arrived.

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- Even in Indonesia, backyard poultry farmers experience was used to tackle bird flu.
- In India too, Primary health centres could examine local/traditional knowledge and use it along with modern technology.

Possible challenges

- While developing such an Inclusive strategy, it would involve synchronisation and integration, reengineering many of the institutional and structural arrangements in the medical sector.
- The possible difficulties include standardisation of health data, organisational silos, data security and data privacy, and high investments.

Conclusion:

- ✓ Big data applications in the health sector would help hospitals provide the best facilities at lesser cost and provide a level playing field for all sectors, encouraging competition and improve the health sector services.

Reference:

A place for disruptive technology in India's health sector :

<https://thg.page.link/xLJVrLKoRB2LpRJH8>

EDITORIAL 2: ACQUITTED BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Topic: General Studies Paper-2 (Judiciary)

Context:

- The Delhi High Court recently ordered the removal of one of its own judgments from easy access and it depicts an important development towards the 'right to be forgotten',.
- The petitioner was acquitted of certain crimes by the court and the judgment was freely accessible on the Internet. However, the petitioner being unhappy with this, sought removal of the judgment from a leading database platform and search engines.
- The court too, as a temporary relief, agreed to remove the judgement from search engines and ordered the database platform to block the judgment from being accessed by search engines.
- The High Court was of view that petitioner has a right to be forgotten, which must be balanced with the right of the public to access courts of record.

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The right to be forgotten:

- The right to be forgotten refers to the right to have information about a person removed from public access.
- Individuals should not be stigmatised for past conduct and should be able to determine the development of their life in an autonomous way.
- In 2017, the Supreme Court in one of its verdict recognised the right to be forgotten as being under the ambit of the right to privacy.
- The top court was of view that if someone desired to remove personal data from the virtual space, it ought to be respected as lot of personal information may serve no “legitimate interest”, and neither it was “necessary” or “relevant”.
- However, the right to be forgotten is subject to reasonable restrictions based on countervailing rights such as free speech.
- Despite the Supreme Court’s judgment, the right to be forgotten remains underdeveloped in India.
- As of now, data is taken down based on the policies of the respective hosts.
- For example, some embarrassing selfies that a person might have posted as a minor, which violate the terms of service, may be taken down as they not only violate terms of service but are also unnecessary and irrelevant.
- However, if these photos have become part of, say, a scientific study on Internet usage patterns by teens, or if the person now holds a prominent government office, they now serve a public purpose and can't be taken down.
- There is a general consensus that people should be allowed to modify or delete information uploaded by themselves.
- However, whether this extends to information uploaded by third parties is uncertain.

- For Example, a news article reporting an accusation of sexual harassment against a public figure and if the person was never convicted, should they continue to bear the infamy? Also whether a misconduct is reportable only if there is a legal proceeding to support it?
- These are the questions which needs to be addressed.

The U.S. example

- During the American civil rights movement, some governments filed defamation claims against newspapers to disincentivise them from reporting violence against protesters.
- During such time, The New York Times was held liable to pay \$500,000 by an Alabama court for some errors in their content.
- In appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court intervened in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan* (1964), and gave a verdict that public interest reporting may continue without fear as long as it did not intentionally or recklessly make outright false statements, Thus, disallowing suppression of criticism and accountability, especially against powerful figures.
- Earlier in India, the courts have ordered take-down of unflattering news articles pertaining to legal proceedings, redaction of names of litigants, and removal of references from search results. However, this was the first time a court has ordered the removal of access to its complete final judgment from certain spaces.
- Whether the removal of judgments of courts of record which are published for good reasons is right or wrong needs to be addressed.
- Trials held under public scrutiny act as a check against judicial caprices and help in enhancing the confidence of the public in the fairness and objectivity of justice.

Conclusion:

- ✓ The court instead of removing the entire judgement itself could have ordered that the name and personal details of the petitioner be redacted. Unaware of the Streisand effect, the court is repeatedly naming the petitioner in its interim order, though it has removed the judgment from easy access.

Reference:

Acquitted but not forgotten: <https://thg.page.link/BMKX2xbGjmTdLsSN6>

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