Digital Health Summit 2023

Why in News?

Recently, **Digital Health Summit 2023** was organized by the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** in Goa.

- CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization.

What are the Major Highlights of Digital Health Summit 2023?

- It highlighted the importance of digital health **innovations** and how they can empower **exponential medicine, including** 3D printing, point-of-care diagnostics, robots, bioinformatics**, and genomics.**
- It aims to create a **digital public goods framework** to promote standards for **interoperability,** data privacy**, and data security.**
- It emphasised the **need for "citizen-centric" digital health systems** with equitable access to **high-quality treatments.**
    - It also highlighted that health-tech is the most significant aspect of the **Fourth Industrial Revolution** and taking pre-emptive steps remains the key.

What is Digital Healthcare?

- **About:**
    - Digital healthcare is a **system of medical care delivery** that uses an array of **digital technologies** to make quality medical care services **accessible, affordable, and sustainable.**
    - The broad scope of digital health includes categories such as **mobile health (mHealth), health information technology (IT), wearable devices, telehealth and telemedicine, and personalized medicine.**
    - **The WHO Global Strategy on Digital Health, adopted in 2020 by the World Health Assembly,** presents a roadmap to link the latest developments in innovation and digital health, and put these tools to action in order to improve health outcomes.
- **Major Applications:**
    - **Point-of-Care Diagnostics:** Point-of-care Diagnostics ("POCD") is an emerging trend in the medical device industry and encompasses a broad range of products which enables accurate diagnostics in resource limited setting by patients themselves or healthcare practitioners.

- In the recent past multiple applications such as **biosensors, portable x rays, handheld ultrasounds and smartphone based POCD have been developed.**
  - **Medical Virtual Assistants: Virtual health assistants and chatbots** bridge the gap between patients and physicians and tend to the needs of the patients in between physical appointments through services such as **appointment scheduling, maintain health records and other administrative tasks.**
  - **Self-Monitoring Healthcare Devices:** Monitors and sensors are now being **integrated into wearables**, which allow it to detect various physiological changes in the body.
    - These smart devices are capable of tracking weight, sleep patterns, posture, diet and exercise.
  - **e-Pharmacies:** An e-pharmacy is a pharmacy that **operates over the internet and fulfils the orders through mail, courier or delivery persons**
- **Benefits of Digital Healthcare:**
  - Telemedicine has played a pivotal role in the **decentralisation of healthcare** and **ensuring access to remote and advanced care.**
  - Patients in rural and remote areas can now access **affordable and quality healthcare through online consultation** and home delivery of medicines.
  - Digital tools can provide healthcare providers with an **extensive view of patient health by increasing access to health data.**

What are the Challenges Related to Digital Healthcare in India?

- **About:**
  - Driven by the **Covid-19 pandemic**, India has adopted digital health at a breathtaking pace. The **unprecedented health crisis paved the way for the adoption of telemedicine** and thus proved to be a dawn of remote and patient-centric care in India.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Absence of Clear Regulation:** The **absence of clear regulations and guidelines** may lead to fraudulent practices, **misuse of digital prescriptions,** data theft, and misuse of electronic health records.
    - Also, the **lack of digital infrastructure and skilled professionals** is another roadblock to the digitalization of the healthcare system in India.
  - **Data Privacy and Cybersecurity:** Ensuring data privacy and cybersecurity is crucial to **maintain patient trust in digital healthcare.** Lack of security measures can lead to data breaches and compromise patient data.
    - For example: An instance of **ransomware attack occurred at AIIMS Delhi recently.**
  - **No Statutory Backing to E-pharmacy: The** Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 **regulates the import, manufacturing and distribution of drugs in India.**
    - **However, there is no statutory definition of "e-pharmacy" either under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 or the Pharmacy Act, 1948.**
- **Government Initiatives Related to Digital Health:**
  - **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM),**
  - **e-Sanjeevani Teleconsultation Service**
  - **Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)**
  - **CoWIN App**

What are the WHO's Objectives for Promoting Digital Health and Innovation?

- **Translating data, research, and evidence into action** through standards for interoperability and data sharing and supporting implementation of digital solutions for informed decision making.
- **Enhancing knowledge through scientific communities** of practice facilitated by new technologies, enabling expert voices to come together around clinical and public health topics.
- **Systematically assessing and linking country needs with supply of innovations,** taking a proactive approach to identify, promote, co-develop, and scale innovations based on country needs.

Way Forward

- **AI Powered Healthcare:** Artificial intelligence (AI) is being increasingly used in healthcare to **analyze large amounts of data, make diagnoses, and predict health outcomes.**
    - This technology has the **potential to improve the accuracy and speed of healthcare delivery,** while also reducing costs.
- **Blockchain in Healthcare: Blockchain technology** can help **improve the security and privacy of health data,** as well as streamline healthcare processes.
    - By providing a **secure and transparent way to store and share information,** blockchain can help **reduce errors, fraud, and administrative costs.**
- **Mobile Health (mHealth):** mHealth involves the **use of mobile devices and apps to deliver healthcare services remotely.**
    - This can be especially useful in rural areas, where **access to healthcare is limited.** mHealth can also help patients **manage chronic conditions and communicate with healthcare providers more easily.**

Source: PIB

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