

# E-way to health: Govt bets big on telemed

## India Will Also Go For A Biometric-Based Health Info System Which Will Constantly Update Health Record Of

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**New Delhi:** Skype, biometrics, M-health (use of mobile phones) and E-health are all set to make an entry into India's primary health centres (PHCs) and sub-centres as the health ministry plans to go hi-tech.

The steering committee on health said that in the 12th plan (2012-17), all district hospitals would be linked to leading tertiary care centres through telemedicine, Skype and similar audio visual media. M-health will be used to speed up transmission of data.

India will also put in place a Citizen Health Information System (CHIS) - a biometric based health information

system which will constantly update health record of every citizen-family. The system will incorporate registration of births, deaths and cause of death. Maternal and infant death reviews, nutrition surveillance, particularly among under-six children and women, service delivery in the public health system, hospital information service besides improving access of public to their own health information and medical records would be the primary function of the CHIS.

The committee said in its report to the Planning Commission, "The overarching goal is to develop a biometric-based health information system, which constantly updates health record of every

citizen-family, which begins with universal vital registration, which is portable and accessible to service providers and to the families themselves. Based on this foundation, a network links all service providers, public and private laboratories and also generates the figures needed at different levels for policy making as well as generates the alerts needed for disease surveillance."

According to the committee, CHIS will incorporate information on service delivery in the public health system helping to make evidence-based and guideline compatible clinical decisions and make morbidity and mortality profile available. This will also help estimate



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burden of disease and facilitate policy decisions at state and national levels.

"Placed on a GIS platform, it can identify geographic concentration of dis-

ease. The system will also provide hospital information service to improve the quality of care to patients through electronic medical records, to lower response time in

emergency and improve hospital administration. It will support emergency response systems and referral transport arrangements, the organ retrieval and transplantation programme," it added.

The ministry plans to give a big push to support telemedicine services in primary, secondary and tertiary care. Disease surveillance based on reporting by providers and clinical laboratories (public and private) to detect and act on disease outbreaks and epidemics would be an integral component of the system.

"The system will also support financial management - from resource allocation, resource transfers, accounting and utilization to financial

services like making of payments to facilities, providers and beneficiaries. It will provide a platform for continuing medical education and support regulatory functions of the state by creating a nation-wide registration of clinical establishments, manufacturing units, drug testing laboratories, licensing of drugs, approval of clinical trials," the document added.

The ministry said that states which are ready to make the transition to electronic medical records would be encouraged to do so. "The major part of public investment in information technology in health care would go to institutional capacity building for understanding and