

Healthcare at Crossroads — Accreditation as a Solution

AKHIL SANGAL, RAJESH UPADHYAY

Modern technology has dramatically changed our lives. Healthcare has been at the forefront of this change; it affects us all. We are able to do a lot more things a lot better. The capacity to diagnose, treat and intervene/operate is amazing today! These advances have helped increase human life span, reduce infant mortality and so on.

These achievements, however, have posed challenges that need to be addressed. Some of these in healthcare today are:

- It requires a variety of experts.
- Gadgets have reduced person-to-person interaction.
- The aged population is increasing.
- Emergence of new disease patterns and problems.
- Healthcare has become very expensive!!

The current healthcare scenario in India can be summarized as follows:

- a. All pervasive felt need for improving healthcare delivery in all its dimensions.
- b. General lack of awareness about the worldview of accreditation, with perceptions bordering on the negative.
- c. India with its vast reservoir of expert resources has a unique advantage.
- d. There are areas of excellence, which need sharing and evolving a consensus.
- e. Mistrust is rife.

As you are aware; in the USA today, treatment errors have become a leading cause of death and disability. One in ten hospital admissions experience adverse incidents in the UK. It is surmised that the situation is much worse in

developing countries. An interesting worldwide study showed that 85% of errors occur due to ignorance or lack of awareness, while less than 2% errors only are willful and intentional!

We need solutions and urgently too! **What can be done? How can it be done? We are at a crossroads!**

You will agree, there is an urgent need to appreciate that

1. Healthcare is everybody's concern
2. It is also everybody's responsibility
3. To improve it, we all need to work together to create awareness and build trust.

ACCREDITATION – SOLUTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE SECTOR

As you are aware, the world over professionally driven, autonomous healthcare accreditation has been the most successful mechanism to resolve the dilemmas/complexities in healthcare delivery today as well as achieve continuous improvement.

Accreditation derives its strength from **Credibility**, which comes from **Content** and that depends on **Competence** for which **Capability** is necessary; available in plenty and our greatest strength.

The “true” form of healthcare accreditation: Comprehensive accreditation addresses all the dimensions of healthcare such as appropriateness, availability, continuity, effectiveness, responsive and caring delivery, safety and risk minimisation and timeliness. The Indian healthcare industry has reached a stage where such a system of accreditation is vital. The creation of benchmarks and validation through peer-

review by professionals is far more credible than externally imposed standards. A credible and transparent accreditation process is of assistance to all stakeholders that is, providers, receivers and users, payers and funders, and educators and regulators.

The Conceptual Solution

To achieve the above goals and in view of worldwide experience, it was envisaged that

- a. A widely held, consensus based organization be developed with synergy of all concerned with healthcare. A non-political organization driven by professionals with actual healthcare providers at the core to take the lead.
- b. This organization to develop guidelines in all areas as a team. The guidelines serve as a framework for learning and implementation by healthcare delivery systems/institutions/establishments. This would result in a standardization of the majority of processes as well as uniformity of service delivery quality. Resultant learning and implementation of processes is continually self-assessed and finally validated periodically through peer review.
- c. The outcome of validation is recognition and reward of excellence. This excellence is continually upgraded to match/exceed/set parameters for the world.
- d. Credibility and high sanctity would best be ensured through leadership by associations and the work be done by individual experts, who shall not be voting members but affiliates to circumvent individual based politics and power/control paradigm.
- e. The organization to be an autonomous not for profit but ultimately self-sustaining institution that encourages volunteering but recognizes and rewards the contributors. The initial funds to come from various sources.

If India is to become a preferred healthcare destination, as pronounced in the National Health Policy, an internationally acceptable and highly credible accreditation system is a necessary prerequisite. Various studies and reports have, in the past, emphasized the necessity of such a system. Even healthcare insurance cannot gain momentum without accreditation. The creation of consensus based guidelines and benchmarks addresses a long-felt need in the Indian healthcare industry, which currently has widely varying practices. For India to take its place in the world as a developed nation, it is imperative to improve healthcare in all its aspects to give our citizens a quality of life comparable to the best. Healthcare delivery needs to be also

accessible and affordable. However, help has also to be available through guidelines to make it a non-threatening, non-punitive process of education, mutual sharing and learning.

Participation by all is a necessary pre-requisite to achieve a continuously improving healthcare delivery system of world-class standards.

Contribution of healthcare to the economy, development and growth of any country is well known; the inverse is true as well. To be able to stand up to the world as well as achieve lasting benefits to our people it is necessary to continuously improve the Quality of the delivery, as is true in all spheres. The transformational ability of technology and quality is undisputed.

India's vast potential is well recognised today due to the largest pool of capable and expert human resources. The National Health Policy 2002 has thus proclaimed the agenda of making India the Health destination of the world. The economic contribution this 'industry' can provide to make India a developed nation (*Vision 2020*) is more than real. However, despite our strengths there is widely felt urgent need for substantial and continuous improvement in this area, before our position of leadership can be achieved. This excellence then needs to be validated and recognised through highly credible mechanisms.

What is ICHA?

Indian Confederation for Healthcare Accreditation (ICHA) is a National not-for-profit organisation incorporated as a Company U/S 25 of the Companies act registered in NCT of Delhi. It is an association of National associations / Institutions of all stakeholders in healthcare.

The basic objective of ICHA is to create a mechanism to establish validated excellence in Healthcare through a comprehensive Healthcare Accreditation System. To develop a continuously improving, self-regulating, patient centred healthcare delivery system for the benefit of all concerned with healthcare i.e. 'providers', 'receivers and users', 'payers and funders' and 'educators and regulators'. ICHA is an autonomous organisation that, through collaborative participation of all concerned, teamwork, continuous learning and benchmarking shall endeavour to achieve India's potential for leadership and improving the quality of life.

What is ICHA trying to do?

The ICHA Initiative: We want to make sure that the right professionals do the right things at the right time,

the right place and at the right cost. This will result in prevention of errors and in reducing costs of care for all. It will enable all people to reap the benefits of modern medicine.

Why API took lead in creation of ICHA?

Quality is achieved by improvement every day. It comes from within when we want it and work for it. It CANNOT be forced! We all know how awareness, persuasion and guidance can change lives. In view of the realities above API took a proactive decision to be one of the prime constituents.

Is Healthcare not the Government's Responsibility?

Healthcare is the government's responsibility – but it is also our responsibility as well. The government can facilitate by providing resources, having appropriate infrastructure, providing corrective mechanisms and so on. By virtue of its power and authority, it can promulgate acts and regulations. However, acts and regulations can only ensure the minimum (if at all, and only when the acts and regulations are wisely written and implemented properly). But is the minimum sufficient? The simple answer is – we all want more than minimum; **we all want Quality care.**

Thus, the government's role is both crucial and “**necessary**”. But it is neither “**sufficient**” nor “**enough**”. Are you aware that in India 80% of healthcare expenditure is met by nongovernment sources? Insurance is only 1% of the private expenditure.

What has been achieved so far?

You are probably aware of development of “**Indian Confederation for Healthcare Accreditation**” on the above lines.

Appreciating the current realities and situation, coupled with the learnt experience from world over of development and establishment of Healthcare Accreditation Systems, a participative approach was chosen. It was decided through a series of progressive interactive meetings beginning August 2002, that **an autonomous body of all stakeholders** (*primarily providers, users, payers, educators and regulators*) **be formed with Healthcare providers forming the core of the body.** Major Healthcare provider professional associations were convinced and have come together to form ICHA.

The National Associations of Physicians (API), Surgeons (ASI), Anaesthetists (ISA), Ophthalmologists

(AIOS), Pharmacists (IPA), Hospital administrators (AHA), Hospital Pharmacists (IHPA) were the initial members of ICHA, however, as of now all the major associations of all stakeholders have either joined in, or decided to join. While the national associations are the voting members, it is appreciated that work has to be done by individuals for whom a database is being formed. Individual organisations are also being enrolled as affiliates. This structure not only ensures credibility but also encourages apolitical contributions by all.

The ICHA Convention – A major landmark

The “National Convention for Achieving Excellence in Healthcare in India” was held at New Delhi on July 2, 2005, supported by WHO India country Office in collaboration with Ministry of Health, Government of India with the following aims:

- To sensitize and make aware the stakeholders about the worldview of accreditation and sharing experiences from abroad.
- Deliberate on the ICHA model as a participative, educational approach of mutual sharing and learning.
- To involve all stakeholders as partners to address the goal of patient-centered healthcare delivery.
- Seek affirmation of the Government and WHO's commitment to achieving of excellence and support to the ICHA initiative.
- Seek convergence of views and perspectives of all stakeholders to fine tune the ICHA model and evolve a committed action plan.

The large number and variety of stakeholders with participation from all nooks and corners of the country and active participation and deliberations signaled the success of the convention.

The **Inaugural Session** set the tone with successive speakers including Dr Salim J Habayeb, WHO representative in India, Dr Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission and Mr Prasanna Hota, Secretary Health, Ministry of Health, reaffirming their solidarity with the ICHA initiative and offering committed support. The celebrations were equally heartening with the honouring of contributors to the ICHA initiative by the Chief Guest.

The **Technical Session** was clearly able to establish accreditation as a most successful tool. The ICHA model of voluntary, all-inclusive stakeholders representation, educative participative model of continuous quality improvement was deemed to be the best way forward.

The role of the Government as facilitator and its funding support was also highlighted. The differentiation between licensure and regulation as well as limitations of ISO like certification system in healthcare was also highlighted. The sharing of experiences from UK and USA demonstrated the feasibility and accrued benefits of such an approach to all stakeholders.

The major conclusion was the unanimous resolutions viz.

- i. ICHA model of accreditation as the right way forward
- ii. Getting together to embark on the journey of excellence.

The following major recommendations and steps forward were evolved:

- a. Widespread awareness creation through all possible channels.
- b. All members to actively enroll various associations, institutions and individuals to ensure all inclusiveness and evolve a database of experts.
- c. Raise funds to carry forward the activities through various sources.
- d. Identify volunteers and conduct "Training of Trainers" programme/s at one or more locations and set the content building in motion alongside.

How I could Participate?

Healthcare affects us all and all are requested to join appropriately as affiliates or through their associations as members. More details of ICHA are available through the links on the left hand side of the home. If India is to become a preferred healthcare destination, as pronounced in the National Health Policy, an internationally acceptable and highly credible accreditation system is a necessary prerequisite. Various studies and reports have,

in the past, emphasized the necessity of such a system. Even healthcare insurance cannot gain momentum without accreditation. The creation of consensus based guidelines and benchmarks addresses a long-felt need in the Indian healthcare industry, which currently has widely varying practices. For India to take its place in the world as a developed nation, it is imperative to improve healthcare in all its aspects to give our citizens a quality of life comparable to the best. Healthcare delivery needs to be also accessible and affordable. However, help has also to be available through guidelines to make it a non-threatening, non-punitive process of education, mutual sharing and learning.

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