

Digital transformation must be accelerated to address healthcare needs



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THE Covid-19 pandemic has been a trigger point for the healthcare sector in speeding up the need to adapt to digital solutions and accelerating the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), data analytics and other solutions to improve its delivery.

Healthcare delivery will look different as we continue to navigate the pandemic and eventually emerge from it.

As with many industries, healthcare will increasingly become a digital experience as emerging technologies, such as AI and data analytics, become integrated into its systems.

For example, telehealth solu-

tions have been given the value proposition that they need to be accepted as a common and trusted mode of healthcare delivery.

According to a study by L.E.K. Consulting and G.R.G. Health, 60 per cent of hospitals in Southeast Asia, India and Australia will continue using increased levels of telehealth post-Covid-19.

The all-encompassing nature of digital solutions spells more end-to-end partnerships across Malaysia's healthcare ecosystem. This can take many forms comprising hospital operators, medical device manufacturers and health-tech start-ups, as well as related technology solutions and private equity investors.

To that end, the Health Ministry has taken action. One recent example of a partnership is the Replacement Through Maintenance initiative to manage the upgrade of computerised tomography (CT) scanners in Malaysia.

The initiative is a partnership between GE Healthcare, a local asset solution provider and biomedical engineering manage-

ment services provider.

Within Malaysia's private healthcare, we are seeing radiology departments integrate patients' records and scans to drive more collaboration across departments of hospitals.

For example, by auto-populating a patient's information as he moves across different departments in a hospital, this can save time, eliminate duplication of data and allow the clinician to cross-reference a patient's history for a more informed diagnosis.

This productivity improvement can make a big difference in critical cases where patients that require immediate care are prioritised automatically.

With the World Health Organisation estimating that non-communicable diseases account for 74 per cent of deaths in Malaysia, digital transformation needs to be accelerated to address healthcare needs and the growing backlog of elective procedures. Now is the time for healthcare providers to start considering what to apply to their workflow and infrastruc-

ture for the long-term.

An example is the next-generation CT scanner that will be available soon in Malaysia. It features a hands-free positioning camera, which minimises contact between the radiologist and patients. The scans are connected to a cloud-based AI software that automatically detects and enhances the scanned image, speeding up the scan process and improving diagnostic accuracy.

Another example is the virtual care concept. Through digital technology, data from devices that monitor the condition of a patient in the intensive care unit can be seen on one screen. As it is cloud-based, medical professionals can view a patient's status collectively and remotely.

This can be connected to the patient's electronic medical records in the hospital's network to highlight and predict complications. It reduces workflow inefficiencies, enabling clinicians to attend to more patients and more effectively prioritise the highest risk cases, while also re-

ducing the risks of infection.

Digital tools can enable remote monitoring and data analytics for equipment servicing. Monitoring data analytics will allow for better predictability of an equipment's performance, allowing engineers to schedule preventive maintenance checks in advance.

Such solutions will require the healthcare ecosystem to drive transformation across departments and facilities.

These spell opportunities not only in technology acquisition, infrastructure planning, hospital design and clinician training but also tertiary education to ensure a steady pipeline of digitally attuned clinicians.

At the heart of it, the future of healthcare will be aimed at driving precision health — healthcare that is personalised and offered at scale for better patient outcomes, care experience and cost-efficiency.

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