One of the most pressing issues facing India and nearly every country is the trajectory of healthcare costs. Between 2004 and 2014, Indian medical expenditures per hospitalisation for patients in urban areas increased by an average of 176%. In rural areas, costs increased just over 160%. However, India’s per capita Gross Domestic Product growth during that time couldn’t keep up, growing by 121%. Yet, just 1.3% of GDP is spent on healthcare, one of the lowest rates in the world. While it is a challenging environment for India’s healthcare system, the good news is that new technologies are being developed to help healthcare organizations decrease the costs of care while improving care, outcomes, and ultimately, clinical effectiveness.

**STEPS TOWARD ACHIEVING CLINICAL EFFECTIVENESS**

To improve quality while containing costs within the healthcare delivery system, organizations must eventually overhaul the actual clinical care being delivered. This requires that providers consistently apply the best knowledge – based on research, evidence-based medicine, and clinical experience – while more deeply engaging patients in their care. It also necessitates a method of continuously defining, monitoring, and measuring the processes at the heart of care delivery. Only when a healthcare system commits to achieving clinical effectiveness within broad-scale practice across all institutions will they begin to make progress in balancing the quality/cost equation.

**GETTING A HANDLE ON VARIABILITY OF CARE**

One step towards attaining clinical effectiveness requires tackling variability of care, and doing so at scale. In India, stark contrasts in the variability of care can also be illustrated by the wide range of costs for the same treatment. The Ministry of Health in India found that 63 million people are thrust into poverty every year due to expenditures that are "catastrophic." This raises another critical challenge: healthcare costs borne by individuals can have devastating impacts. We now have the know-how, the technology, and the sense of urgency to reduce this variability and work toward standardization of care.

**PATIENT-CENTRED CARE AND THE NEW HEALTHCARE CONSUMER**

Evolving models of care are putting patients at the centre of their own care, all providers involved in a patient’s care can function more consistently and seamlessly to enable greater clinical effectiveness. The industry now has tools that encourage behaviour modification, helping patients to better follow recommendations, to more closely adhere to standards, and to understand the benefit of investing their time by measuring outcomes.

COORDINATING CARE ACROSS THE CONTINUUM

Improving clinical effectiveness will ultimately require a longitudinal view of the patient, rather than the fragmented view that has been more typical. It will also mean that measurement of the various care processes must span the many steps in the continuum of care. Ultimately, this holistic, patient-centred approach will help patients and providers to make the right choices that optimize outcomes.

**NEXT-GENERATION TOOLS FOR CLINICAL EFFECTIVENESS**

Clearly, several facets of healthcare must change to improve the clinical effectiveness of India’s healthcare system. Since coordinated information is at the heart of this vision, advanced integrated technology and content enablement will be required. At Wolters Kluwer, we’ve been working to broaden our impact on healthcare by developing the next generation of advanced clinical decision support solutions (ACDS). Building on our CDS foundation, we are developing an integrated solution comprised of patient engagement, personalized medical education, and measurement capabilities that quantify both impact and quality of care.

ACDS offers a better way for patients and providers to make the right choices by having intuitive and actionable content seamlessly embedded into healthcare portals and professional workflows. Ultimately, ACDS is about taking a more comprehensive approach to decision support, one that will help providers finesse the delicate balancing act of curtailing costs while delivering high quality care.

Patients deserve the best care healthcare organizations can deliver. They deserve to have providers making the best decisions possible, with everyone in the healthcare continuum. With the right tools and technologies in place, enabled by the next generation of clinical decision support resources, the vision of optimal clinical effectiveness is now within reach.

**References:**