Research Article

Practo: Is it a Healthy Prescription for Indian Health Care Industry?

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ABSTRACT

The role of information technology is vital in all the sectors. It has made a significant impact even on the healthcare sector. One of the monumental milestone is the launch of Practo in May 2009. Practo is the leader in providing a software platform in health care industry. Practo Ray was the first SaaS product the company launched in India. Practo is an online tool which aids the medical practitioners and hospitals to manage their practice across the globe. The Indian Hospitals are traditional in their outlook and refuse to share medical information about the patients even with the close relatives of the patients or the patient itself. The flow of communication between the patients and the doctors is an essential ingredient for the medical treatment. The Research activities in the medical field are expanding in a multi fold manner. The study aims to analyse the knowledge acquired by the doctors and hospitals about e health care and to check their awareness level about Practo. Most of the new generation doctors were willing to use Practo Ray. It is highly successful in reaching private doctors and clinics because those doctors and clinics are much open minded and they have practically realized the value of the service. The ultimate objective of Practo is to offer a holistic service for the patients to reach the right doctor at the right time at the right place. To achieve this, they try to reach as many patients as possible through all possible ways.

Keywords: Health Care Management, e Health Software, Patient Record Management, Hospital Administration.

INTRODUCTION

The role of information technology is vital in all the sectors. It has made a significant impact even on the healthcare sector. One of the monumental milestone is the launch of Practo in May 2009. Practo was originally incorporated in the name of turbodoc.in. Practo was founded by Mr.Shashank and Mr. Abhinav Lal in Bengaluru when both of them were doing their third year engineering programme. Practo is the leader in providing a software platform in health care industry. Practo Ray was the first SaaS product the company launched in India. Practo is an online tool which aids the medical practitioners and hospitals to manage their practice across the globe.

The doctors also can effectively manage the records and reports relating to their patients. Practo also helps the patients by sending mobile and e mail alerts about their appointments with the doctors.

Statement of the Problem

Technology is widely used by the younger generation to the maximum possible extent, when compared to the older generation.

Practo has an extensive market with target audience as the younger generation doctors. It becomes little challenging for Practo to target the elderly population of doctors as majority of them hesitate or rather refuse to use technology.

Need and Importance of the Study

The Indian Hospitals are traditional in their outlook and refuse to share medical information about the patients even with the close relatives of the patients or the patient itself. The flow of communication between the patients and the doctors is an essential ingredient for the medical treatment. The Research and Development activities in the medical field are expanding in a multi fold manner. There are numerous specialties arising in healthcare industry on a regular basis. Information explosion has become the phenomenon in this field.

Streamlining of this information revolution is the need of the hour. Otherwise, the patients will be kept in dark about the innovations and inventions that are taking place in the field. Practo is in the process of disseminating quality medical information to the public in general and the patients in particular. This paper makes an earnest attempt to evaluate the efforts taken by Practo in creating awareness about e- health care among the medical practitioners.

Objectives of the Study

• To analyse the knowledge acquired by the medical practitioners about e-health care.

• To check the awareness level of the medical practitioners about Practo.

• To suggest valuable propositions to Practo based on the findings of the study.

Review of Literature

The previous research works on the various health care software applications were meticulously analyzed besides identifying the research gaps. An attempt has been made

to review case studies and the work of individual researchers, magazines, journals, articles pertaining to healthcare software applications.

Rudiger[1] with the purpose of Harnessing the merits of mobile information technology (IT) solutions with a view to contribute to patients' safety by linking them applied case study analysis and came out with a conclusion that the user-friendly handy IT applications going beyond documentation of patient records and management necessitate an understanding of intricate communication processes between patients and the different caregivers. Home care increasingly faces structural deficits to be mitigated by integration of IT solutions. Platforms chosen in combination with services should be well established. They are also of the opinion that preliminary results indicate potentials for novel mobile applications.

Chunhuei[2] observed the practice of Health Information Technology (HIT) in reviewing the national health care system in Taiwan. They used the following five criteria for the purpose of the study. how well does the HIT (1) supply reachable and exact public health and health care information to the population; (2) gather and offer population health and health care data for government and researchers to investigate population health and processes and outcomes of health care services; (3) present handy and apt information that helps to develop provision of cost-effective health care at an institutional level and promotes system-wide efficiency; (4) reduce transaction and administrative costs of the health care system; and (5) create channels for population participation in governance while also protecting individual privacy. The outcome points out that Taiwan has high levels of achievement in two criteria while falling short in the other three. Major lessons learnt from this study are that HIT exists to serve a health care system, and the national health care system context dictates how one assesses its HIT.

Kenneth[3]. Enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems present organizations with the opportunity to amalgamate individual, functionally-oriented information systems. Although much of the focus in the popular press has been placed on ERP systems in large for-profit organizations, small hospitals and clinics are candidates for ERP systems. Focusing information systems on critical success factors (CSFs) allows the organization to address a limited number of areas associated with performance. This limited number of factors can provide management with an insight into dimensions of information that must be addressed by a system. The results indicate support for the continuing use of CSFs to help focus on the benefits of ERPs. Focusing on groups of tangible and intangible benefits can also assist the rural health-care organization in the use of ERPs.

Manolis[4]. The rising of chronic illness and the continuous aging of the global population requires a re-organization of health care systems based on relations and exchange of information to address patient needs in the community. The re-organization of health care systems involves interconnected changes and the development of integrated health care information The paper concludes with policy and practice recommendations for managing change processes in health care organizations.

Ali Ahmad Awad Rawabdeh[5]. The objective is to scrutinize the potential of e-health by focusing clearly on the delivery of health care products and services, by one extensive research question, "What is the potential for constructing e-health strategy as an innovative health technology?" An enormous amount of concentration has been given to e-health activity in the present day. However important this form of e-health is, this type of service simply does not face the same constraints that must be addressed by those actually delivering health care services. This paper reviews the e-health trends to demonstrate the tremendous potential for health-related commercial activity on the internet. However, the researcher examining the barriers facing e-health to the Jordanian health system also pointed out almost insurmountable challenges.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is conducted using primary and secondary data. The secondary data is collected from various published and unpublished sources. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect primary data from doctors and hospital administrators. Simple random sampling method was used to collect primary data. 150 questionnaires were distributed and 128 were collected by the researcher and 100 questionnaires were chosen for the purpose of the study. A pilot study was conducted to validate the questionnaires and to confirm the reliability and feasibility of the study. A sample of 30 questionnaires was distributed for pilot study. The Cronbach's Alpha Criterion was applied to test the reliability.

The value was determined as 0.926. This also explains that the statements in the questionnaires are understood by the respondents at 92.6% level. The quality of the questionnaire was ascertained and the test showed high reliability. The variables considered for the analysis are satisfying the normal probability distribution. Based on the pilot study, the questionnaires were modified suitably to elicit response from the sample group.

Practo-The Growth Story

Practo is rated as the top most company offering healthcare technology platform in Asia. It is functioning in six countries and 35 cities across Asia. Practo followed a two-pronged approach in their product offering:

1. Practo Ray which is a doctor facing management software for the doctors offered on the basis of monthly subscription.

2. Practo.com which is a consumer facing doctor discovery portal for both the patients and the doctors provided at free of cost.

Practo - The Acquisition Spree

Practo is in the process of acquiring related companies to expand their technology and business base.

- Practo acquired Insta Health Solutions for USD 12 million during September 2015. Insta provides cloud-based hospital information management solution which helps the clinics and hospitals across Asia, Africa and Arabia.

- Insta focuses on providing efficient hospital information management solution to give a better healthcare experience to the patients.

- The integration of Insta and Practo helps the patients to get holistic online information about doctors and post discharge summary through a mobile app.

- The software has been used by various hospitals, laboratories, clinics for complete automation including patient management, medical record maintenance, operation theatre management, medical insurance matters, laboratory instruments management etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aims to analyse the knowledge acquired by the doctors and hospitals about e health care and to check their awareness level about Practo.

Table 3.1.1.a.: Gender and Awareness Level

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent	Yes		No	
			Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Male	67	67%	60	89.5%	07	10.5%
Female	33	33%	20	60.6%	13	39.4%
Total	100	100%	80	80%	20	20%

Table 3.1.1.b: Association Between Gender and Awareness Level

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.578	1	.001
Likelihood Ratio	10.964	1	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.463	1	.001
No. of Valid Cases	100		

Table 3.1.2.a.: Age and Awareness Level

Age	Frequency	Valid Percent	Yes		No	
			Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
26-35	32	32%	32	100%	-	-
36-45	36	36%	34	94.4%	02	5.6%
46-55	15	15%	10	66.66%	05	33.34%
56-65	10	10%	05	50%	05	50%
Above 65	07	07%	02	28.5%	05	71.5%
Total	100	100%	83	83%	17	17%

Table 3.1.2.b.: Association Between Age and Awareness Level

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	39.926	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	39.740	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	36.576	1	.000
No. of Valid Cases	100		

Table 3.1.3.a: Qualification and Awareness Level

Qualification	Frequency	Valid percent	Yes		No	
			Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
UG-General	40	40%	25	62.5%	15	37.5%
PG-Specialty	60	60%	55	91.67%	05	8.33%
Total	100	100%	80	80%	20	20%

Table 3.1.3.b: Association Between Qualification and Awareness Level

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.667	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	16.848	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.500	1	.000
No. of Valid Cases	100		

Table 3.1.4.a: Occupation and Awareness Level

Occupation	Frequency	Valid percent	Yes		No	
			Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Government	45	45%	15	33.33%	30	66.67%
Private	55	55%	50	91%	05	09%
	100	100%	65	65%	35	35%

Table 3.1.4.b: Association Between Occupation and Awareness Level

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.313	1	.012
Likelihood Ratio	6.375	1	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.250	1	.012
No. of Valid Cases	100		

From the above tables (**Table 3.1.1.a and Table 3.1.1.b)**, it is clear that 67% of the respondents are male and 33% of the respondents are female and there is an association between gender and awareness level. The male doctors are having a wider knowledge about the usefulness of Practo than the female doctors.

From the above tables (**Table 3.1.2.a and Table 3.1.2.b)**, it is obvious that 32% of the respondents are in the age group of 26-35. 36% are in the age group of 36-45. The respondents within the age group of 46-55 are covering 15% of the total sample.10% of the sample falls under the age group of 56-65 and only 7% are above 65. There is a very strong association between the age group and the awareness level. 17% of the doctors are yet to get themselves acquainted with Practo. The noteworthy point is that 66% of the doctors below the age of 45 are thorough with the features and applicability of Practo. The matter for concern is 34% of the doctors over 45 years of age are completely ignorant about Practo. It is very obvious that higher the age lower is the awareness

level about the software. The knowledge level and awareness level about Practo is high among the younger generation doctors than the older generation.

From the above tables (**Table 3.1.3.a and Table 3.1.3.b)**, it is apparent that 40% of the respondents have completed their under graduation in medicine and 60 % of them are post graduates either in general medicine or in any other specialty.

There is a strong association between qualification and awareness level. The usage of Practo is found to be very high among the specialty doctors than the general medical practitioners. 91.67% of the specialty doctors carry out their patient management through Practo, whereas only 62.5 % of the general medical practitioners are efficiently using Practo.

From the above tables (**Table 3.1.4.a and Table 3.1.4.b)**, it is concrete that 45% of the doctors work for government hospitals with a private clinic and 55% work for private hospitals with a private clinic. There is a strong association between the occupation and awareness level

about the Practo. The doctors working for private hospitals and doing private practice are using Practo to the optimum possible extent. 91% of the doctors practicing in private hospitals are well versed with the concept of Practo and e health management. Two thirds of the doctors working for government hospitals are unaware of the concept of IT in health care management system.

Findings of the Study

Practo is highly popular among the male doctors. Most of the new generation doctors were willing to use Practo Ray but had problems with internet connection and use of a desktop or a laptop. On realizing this issue, Practo developed an exclusive Tab for the doctors and launched the same during June 2014. This product was a huge hit among the health care individuals. Practo Ray is highly successful in reaching private doctors and clinics because those doctors and clinics are much open minded and they have practically realized the value of the service. In huge and multi specialty hospitals, the hospital administrative authorities are responsible for patient management system and the doctors do not interfere on the same. Practo is creating huge database on a everyday basis and the medical industry can use the data for a marathon research in the field of healthcare industry.

CONCLUSION

Integration with the IT sector is the order of the day. The ultimate objective of Practo is to offer a holistic service for the patients to reach the right doctor at the right time at the right place. To achieve this, they try to reach as many patients as possible through all possible ways. They are working towards creating awareness among the patients and the health care professionals. Practo will definitely pave the way for overall development and expansion in the healthcare industry.

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