

SPACE COMMUNICATIONS AND NAVIGATION SYMPOSIUM (B2)
Fixed and Broadcast Communications (2)

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INDIAN TELEMEDICINE PROGRAM FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION - TOWARDS
NATIONAL ADAPTION

Abstract

Purpose: The Telemedicine Program conceptualization, formulation and implementation in India is primarily spearheaded by the Indian Space Agency ISRO along with the support of some hospitals, dedicated Doctors, Technologists, state governments and Health Administrators. The Telemedicine being new and a technology based healthcare delivery system, the challenges for implementation and adaptation needed to be comprehensively addressed since the Health care in India is administered by States Governments with federal government responsible for national policies and funding.

Methodology: ISRO took the prime initiative of Telemedicine under Space Technology for societal applications in 2001 adopting multipronged strategy addressing some of the important issues to fruition.

The paper will discuss how ISRO systematically mobilised the diverse groups of stake holders - Doctors, Specialist Hospitals, State Governments, Health Administrators, Technologists and industry in to common platform for the cause of improved health care to the rural population.

Results: Today India has one of largest Telemedicine networks with ISRO' Satcom based Telemedicine network alone amounting about 400 hospitals -350 remote/ rural/ district/Medical college hospitals in most of 25 States connected 50 Specialty hospitals located in major cities in the country including 15 Mobile units covering the various medical specialties. Federal Government set up a National Task force under health ministry for formulating policies and guidelines for ushering Telemedicine into the mainstream of health care delivery and future implementation rests with the Health ministries and departments. A National Tele oncology and Tele Ophthalmology network is under implementation with new funding for future.

Conclusion: ISRO Telemedicine program leveraging Satcom based technology and connectivity demonstrated beneficial change in reaching out to the rural population of India and has lead to Health ministry and all concerned in recognizing Telemedicine as an important application under National Rural Health Mission of the country. The paper discusses the implementation challenges, experiences and the road ahead for this innovative application of Telemedicine in India