



In the wake of COVID-19, the whole world is introspecting! Individuals, corporations, Governments, and international organization alike; introspection on where we went wrong and what we must do to ensure overcoming the problem at hand.

Why is introspection so important?

As defined by Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, introspective knowledge is often thought to be immune to sceptical doubt and thus more secure and assists sound decision making.

In 40+ years of my clinical practice and 20+ years of providing health and insurance related solutions, we help our clients introspect – introspect on their pain points and what exactly they need. Once client has clarity – solutions are either created or offered.

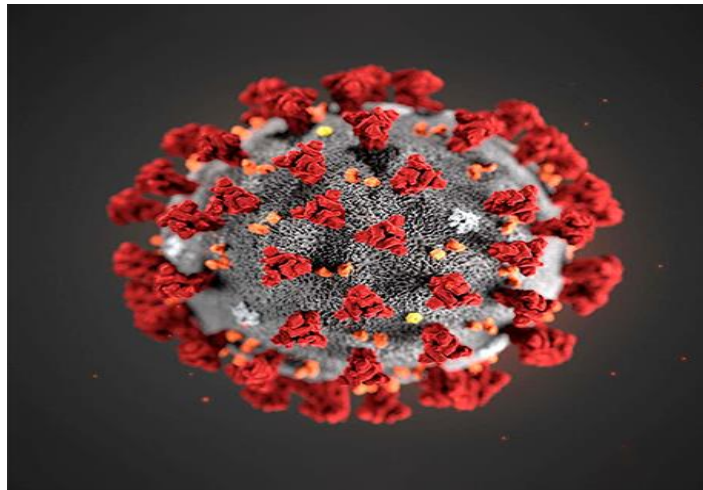
The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented leveller – affecting both the royalty as well as the common man. Business leaders are introspecting on how best can they come out of this crisis? Will this WFH habit change the way future business is conducted? and most importantly - Whether all pre-COVID assumptions would still work? Both health and insurance industries await huge and true digital disruptions.

Presenting our maiden publication, we wish our patrons and their families and teams, best of health in these challenging circumstances and assure all support to help solve the potential problems in getting back to normalcy.

- By Dr C H Asrani, Founder & CEO

COVID-19 - A LESSON AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE AMENDMENTS

(By Dr C H Asrani, Founder & CEO)



Do we always need to wake up at the time of crises? Today, in the midst of COVID-19 global emergency the world countries are fighting the virus on an individual basis due to its contagious nature and requirement of extensive rescue operations. Even the first world countries with advance healthcare facilities are totally overwhelmed and are not able to contain the spread of the virus. We, are all introspecting where we went wrong and what can be done to improve the situation at hand?

The whole world is in a panic mode and is spending trillions of dollars to fight the disease, which only originated some 90 days ago.

The crux of the problem is that same erroneous methodology has been used for fighting other more common acute infections (diarrhoeal diseases, malaria, tuberculosis etc) or terminal events of chronic diseases (heart attacks, strokes, chronic renal failure etc). The healthcare system continues to be under dire pressure even in the first world countries as preventive measures are not given due importance. It's high time we change our mindsets at all fronts – be it individuals, the healthcare community, insurance industry or the nation; and start seeing all of these as a failure of our duty of prevention of infections and delay of terminal events. It is a known fact that a large part of the budget (20%++) of any mass health scheme is spent in dialysis. Impending chronic renal failure, which, can be detected 10 years before it occurs through a simple urine test and attempts made to reverse the progression from stage 1 to stage 5 before dialysis/ transplant is recommended.

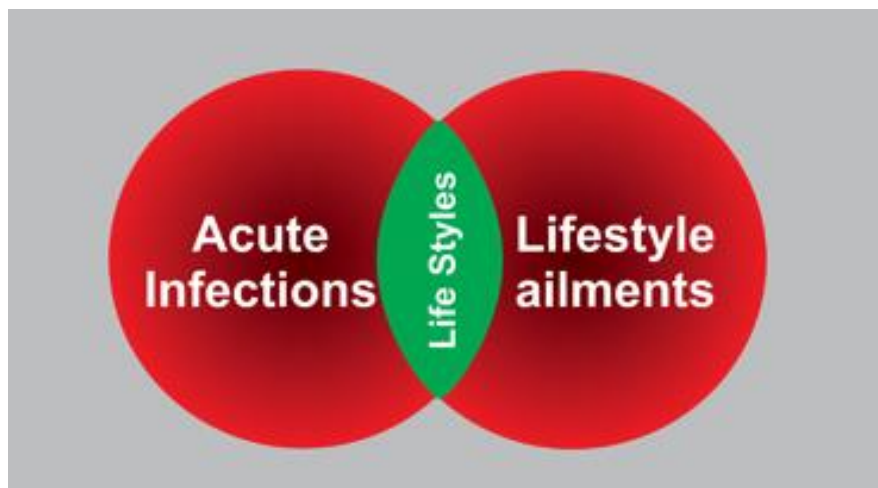
It has become evident that "Immunity" has been the biggest saviour fighting against COVID-19 in masses, especially in absence of availability of specific medication. We have seen the most impacted are the elderly and the ones with comorbidities but that may not have been the case if we had worked on strengthening their immune system. It would have benefited in many ways like quick recovery of COVID 19 patients thereby controlling the spread of the

virus and most importantly less pressure on the health system, economy, government, insurers, and nation as a whole.

From time immemorial every disease / ailment, be it acute infection or life-style disease, had 3 standard management methodologies.

1. Non-pharmacological treatment – Treatments not involving medicinal intervention. For example – diet, complete rest, use of ice or heat pad etc.
2. Pharmacological treatment – treatment involving specific and supportive medication.
3. Prevention – Proactive measures to stop, reverse or cure illness or injury.
 - General prevention– hygiene, sanitation, diet, exercise
 - Specific medical prevention– vaccine/ drugs – although unfortunately, penetration of adult vaccination is abysmally low in India and more awareness is recommended.

We, also, know that all lifestyle ailments are preventable and controllable through lifestyle correction and are also rationally treatable. What we do not appreciate is that attention to the lifestyle/habits also helps infectious diseases prevention significantly! Better body immunity helps either ward off or fight the infection.



Lifestyle is a way people live their lives and includes various behaviours and functions of individuals. With infections being one of the major problems in the world today with an estimated one billion people living with one or multiple infections, the importance of a healthy lifestyle has not been recognised. Socio-political, economic and health costs to the society from infections are enormous.

Behaviour modification is needed in the following fields: diet and nutrition style, regular and effective exercises, safe sexual practices, sleep and awakening pattern, social lifestyle, recreation, and entertainment activities.

It is, thus, recommended to begin with continuing focused, customised efforts on lifestyle management towards infectious diseases prevention and control.

In recent years, lifestyle management has attracted millions of so-called experts with different levels of literacy and academics. Tall claims (largely non-scientific) related to lifestyle improvements occupy a major part of social media. There are hordes of scams promising better lifestyle by mere ingestion of potions, pills, and supplements.

To mitigate the risks of another world-wide pandemic it is time to have a relook at healthcare meted out to masses, employees, and insured customers. Urgent implementation is required by GOVERNMENT, EMPLOYER, INSURER, AND INDIVIDUALS!

We need to take some pointers and suggestion from the western world's model of health care. Everyone's health is to be ASSURED!

Moreover, we have to add an additional "P" in the Preventive, Promotive and Curative definition of Healthcare – Predictive! Predictive analytics will enable the best decisions to be made, allowing for health care to be personalised to each individual.

Initially, we need to identify and rectify the core problem of poor lifestyle habits of junk food, sedentary lifestyle, less sleep, virtually no exercise and the currently prevalent excess use of both over the counter and prescription medications.

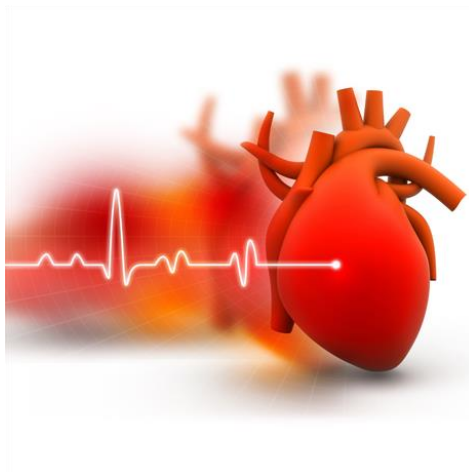
The guided program will help us focus on subsequent measures:

- Identifying bad/ poor lifestyle of Individuals (including the Insured)
- Focused activity towards lifestyle correction/ behaviour modification
- Periodic, relevant testing as and when required.
- Managing aberrations in results
- Predict likely disease and their timelines.
- Work towards extending timeline and control using optimal lifestyle/ drugs.
- A joint effort from State Governments / Municipalities / District administrations (and mega corporates with their own local clusters) to focus on sanitation and participate in health awareness and prevention programs.

We should take COVID-19 as a lesson and an opportunity to take drastic steps and make amendments in the healthcare system and procedures. The proactive preventive measures will also help us to turn the tide on other chronic diseases and their treatments which otherwise is not only leaking colossal funds from Government and Insurers presently. The problem has become so fierce that it is leading to huge numbers of medical bankruptcy in uninsured/ underinsured population!

UNCOVERING THE COVERAGES IN LIFE AND HEALTH INSURANCE UNDERWRITING

(By Dr Salma R Khan, AVP - Legal Solutions)



While the endeavour of any insurance company would be to provide as much covers as possible, let's look at some astonishing data about the lifestyle diseases in India:

- Estimates are hypertension plagues 1/3 of population.

Centre for Science and Environment identifies seven major lifestyle health problems in India:

- Over 61 per cent of all deaths in India attributed to lifestyle or non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
- More than 1.73 million new cancer cases likely to be recorded each year by 2020; air pollution, tobacco, alcohol and diet change are primary triggers.
- Every 12th Indian a diabetic -- India ranks second in the list of countries with highest diabetes patients.
- More than 2.7 million people in India die of heart diseases every year – 52 per cent of them below the age of 70.
- Every third child in Delhi has impaired lungs; India had 35 million chronic asthma patients in 2016.
- Air pollution causes 30 per cent of all premature deaths in the country; linkages with mental diseases revealed.

Seven major health problems in India - Body Burden: Lifestyle Diseases

- **Obesity:** The number of overweight and obese people in India doubled between 2005 and 2015. Among individuals aged between 15-49 years, 20.7 per cent of women and 18.6 per cent of men have been found to be overweight or obese.
- **Mental health:** More than 10 per cent of the country's population over the age of 18 suffers from various kinds of mental illnesses. The lifetime prevalence of such mental illnesses is over 13 per cent. At least 150 million people in the country, affected by mental disorders, are in need of active medical intervention.
- **Cancer:** More than 1.73 million new cancer cases are likely to be recorded each year by 2020 in India.

- **Heart diseases:** 26 per cent of all deaths in India happen due to cardiovascular diseases. Men and young are at a higher risk. In urban India, young and middle-aged people are at risk, while in rural areas, the elderly population is vulnerable.
- **Respiratory diseases:** India had an estimated 22.2 million chronic COPD patients and around 35 million chronic asthma patients in 2016.
- **Hormonal disorders:** Every 12th Indian is said to be a diabetic. Data on other hormonal diseases is still not available. Small studies suggest that one in 10 adults suffer from hypothyroidism.

INCHES DELIBERATION:

To cover medical conditions like Heart disorders, Metabolic disorders, Cancer, Hormonal disorders etc. especially in a country like India, the challenge is enormous.

While insurance cover can be granted for any or every ailment, it's just that with every ailment being covered, the premium also increases proportionately. And how does one price a product when the data of health care and its cost is not captured at a national level? Lack of availability of authentic data for each medical condition (its incidence, cost, etc.) is the major challenge for product development and underwriting teams. The challenge multifolds when the underwriting has to be done for more than one lifestyle disease, a very common example being Hypertension and Type II Diabetes. Both have some underlying causes in common and also share some risk factors; they also contribute to a worsening of each other's symptoms. Therefore, while both these ailments have their individual risks, their cumulative effect is much more than their individual impact and the insurance cover would definitely depend on the severity of both these conditions to understand its synergic value. The synergistic impact of both these conditions can increase the risk of Heart Attack, Stroke, decreasing kidney functions progressing to dialysis, peripheral vascular disease, etc. Let's take an example here, an applicant, who is hypertensive and diabetic, recorded normal blood pressure readings during medical examination but Serum Creatinine values were raised thereby implying kidney dysfunction. Another example would be well controlled hypertension and diabetes but obese individual.

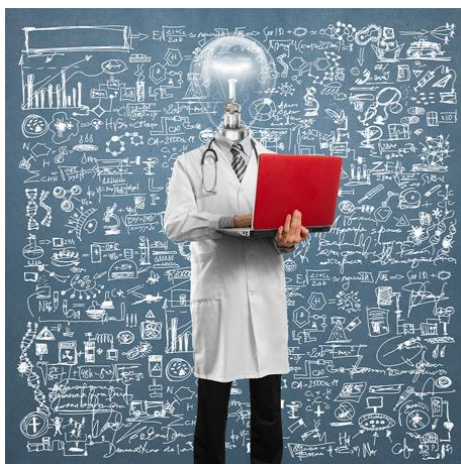
Currently, the guidelines for underwriting are disease specific with mild moderate and severe range and the data based on which it is developed is not purely for India population. So, the need of the hour is:

- To work towards creating authentic database for healthcare at a national level and regulator helping the insurance company to leverage that data for assessment of risk.
- Develop underwriting manuals for mortality and morbidity for Indian lives with Indianised data and also research on understanding the cumulative effects of certain commonly occurring lifestyle diseases.

All this will certainly help insurance companies to offer the covers for the intended medical conditions with an optimal pricing, which is very important for sustainable growth of insurance companies.

5G IN INSURANCE - A BOON! IS IT?

(By Dr Anisha Ramit, AVP - Business Development & Compliance)



Annexure

I had written this article on “5G in Insurance - A boon! Is it?” prior to the corona pandemic. Though 5G was considered a rising arc of the digital revolution, its cahoots with the insurance world was questioned owing to its lower connectivity, low penetration rates and non- availability of 4G even after a decade after its launch.

A phase of digital revolution and increased penetration was predicted in my article, all of which stands true, today!

In the ongoing phase of pandemic, the future majorly relies on digital business. Earlier the digital adaption was enabled with the ease to access information from remote areas and also gaining expertise while saving logistic cost. Search engines became popular for doubt solving and companies gradually started adapting digital management methodologies. But this progress was unhurried.

COVID- 19 not only accelerated this phase of adaption but also made sure that currently each work relies on nitty-gritty of internet resources. With almost the whole country working from home, we all are feeling the pinch of poor connectivity. Well, that is to stay!

AI, ML based solutions are gaining greater importance, but to deploy the solutions, it becomes crucial for companies to ensure its compatibility and usability with not only 4G/ 5G but also with 2G.

Inability to do so, may lead to serious operational and financial risks to the company. To upscale economy and prevent dissolution, it's time to acclimatize and ensure maximise utilisation of whatever internet resources available.

Original Article

Last few months I have been reading posts of insurers gung-ho about 5G disrupting the industry – sales to servicing to operations. From an Indian perspective, where even 4G is not available across the country – should we start basing assumptions on 5-G disruption?

A decade ago, 4G had changed the norms with improving connectivity, increasing internet penetration and improving near instant linkage between stakeholders.

Now as 5G invades the space, it has given rise to expectations painting a rosy future wherein:

Now as 5G invades the space, it has given rise to expectations painting a rosy future wherein:

1. Data speed could be 20 times faster.
2. Will require less capacity.
3. Simultaneous processes could be seamless.
4. Data utilization can improve.
5. Time efficient management of data

These features will help fire new applications, AI tools, application of robotics touching across all industries.

In the industrial world, where everyone is welcoming this change with open arms, it also becomes important to understand its impact and challenges w.r.t insurance.

The insurance world treasures a huge amount of data whose segregation, utilization and management is the key to technology driven solutions.

5G can help data mining, application of AI and link ability to allow real-time risk calculations, seamless policy purchase, reduction of manual errors, faster claim processing, connecting healthcare providers with the insurance company/ TPA directly at a much lesser capacity, thus reducing the costs, unaccounted risks and thus, hopefully, eventually reducing the cost of doing business.

But in India, these assumptions may face a lot of challenges:

10 years ago, the launch of 4G though marked a revolution with higher acceptance and increase in adaption, it's spread across India though did not appear difficult, faced many speed breakers. Today, even after a decade passing by the penetration of 4G lies at a mere 21%. Though the promise of 4G was fast and reliable network and the promise given by network companies was to ensure connectivity even in the corners of the nation, the promises failed miserably with dead zones, low data speed and regular call drops.

Even the broadband connectivity penetration in India is at a mere 45% compared an average of over 50% globally.

With these low penetration rates associated with financial implications for adaption, it became difficult for insurance companies to provide the basic digital services to their customers.

With AI, ML and digital transformation marking the change for 2020 and talks of 5G coming up, the threat of cybersecurity frauds not only still pertains but may actually increase – what with shorter TATs.

Though quantum computers can help prevent these issues by reinventing aspects of cybersecurity because of their inability to break codes and encrypt electronic codes, but these computers falling in the wrong hands can pose serious risk.

Insurance companies have to ensure and apply still higher levels of data security to prevent such breach and secure the huge pool of ever-increasing data.

Even with the rosy picture of 5G and its associated connectivity, lack of penetration and adaption merged with the already existing challenges of data coalition, it's utilization and threat to data security might lay heavy on the insurance industry.

What may change?

All tech-based solutions viz analytics, OCR, ICR, ML & AI solutions will churn out results faster but since in Insurance – every decision needs a human intervention – the final output may still take time.

Sales may not benefit from 5G especially in tier II, tier III, and remote locations.

Summarizing, for insurers to succeed in implementing the use of 5G to its potential, it is essential that they keep their ear to the ground at all times and implement strategies on the fly.