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Healthcare needs change in business process'

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Singapore: Healthcare across the Asia-Pacific is in a state of accelerated evolution due to not only changing demographics, but also due to disruptions in the traditional industry value-chain, analyzes Frost and Sullivan.

While the top private healthcare service providers in countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are likely to witness between 15 to 20 percent revenue growth due to continued growth in medical tourism, a shift in balance of consumers where public healthcare is prioritised for those with greater need and growing customer sophistication, there is a need to focus on cost efficient delivery of healthcare through shared responsibility across the value chain.

With a significant increase in the old-age dependency ratio especially in industrialised countries like Australia, Japan and Singapore, aging populations have a higher demand for surgical interventions as well as aging in place supportive care. While these countries are seeing a transition in healthcare infrastructure towards day or ambulatory surgery as well as home healthcare, emerging markets in Asia have been been slower to adopt this as healthcare is still very much treatment oriented and hospital focused. With increasing patient population, budget constraints and shortage of resources impacting the current medical world, Asia has not been spared and efficiency is the buzz word in the management of every hospital and delivery of healthcare services.

Singapore faces the same challenges particularly with public healthcare facilities becoming increasingly over-crowded with patients. However, Singapore is an investment intensive country with a special focus on R&D investments. At the same time, the country is also ahead of the technology adoption curve as compared to other countries in the Asia-Pacific region and

encourages consumers to use sophisticated technologies to support health and wellness.

The evolution and establishment of polyclinics or clinics, is both complementary to as well as a threat to the private hospital sector. Transitioning and ensuring seamless care across primary and tertiary centres is not seamless and holistic healthcare management is still a challenge. However, a well-established primary care infrastructure increases the accessibility for patients.

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"This is changing the way hospitals look at their operations, structure, roles, activities as well as their key measurements. The traditional operating models are no longer relevant in today's healthcare environment and healthcare service providers need to focus on areas where they have expertise and can create efficiency and value-based care," said Ms. Rhenu Bhuller, Senior Vice President, Healthcare Practice, Frost & Sullivan, Asia Pacific.

"Healthcare service providers can move across the value chain through partnerships, collaborations or acquisitions to be able to provide end to end services, consisting not only of treatment, but financing, pharmacy and lab services as well as follow on home care that will enable them to ensure resources are used effectively and for maximum benefit," she added.

Healthcare providers and industry players need to consider key trends and dynamics which are driving reform in healthcare systems across the Asia-Pacific region. Key trends to consider in the healthcare industry include mobility and security of information, risk sharing, rebalancing of public and private sector financing and delivery of care, use of data to drive decisions as well as patient engagement.

Governments in the Asia Pacific region are increasingly introducing populist measures and streamlining healthcare regulations. Transparency in pharmaceutical pricing is one of the important steps towards affordable healthcare for the population. In addition, governments will also improve drug reimbursement regimes to support access to care for underserved communities as well as aged care. This may lead to tighter pricing controls and impact profitability for manufacturers, leading them to make decisions to focus on the more lucrative private sector.