

“Obstructive Sleep Apnea brings about a severe economic burden on the country”

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A recent consensus by the Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI) highlights the importance of screening for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) in patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM). The report reveals that over 50 per cent of patients diagnosed with T2DM suffer from sleep disturbances, many of which may require treatment. In addition, OSA can occur together with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) leading to so-called overlap syndrome. To gather more information about the treatment for such conditions, BioSpectrum spoke to Carlos Montiel, Vice President- Latin America, and South Asia, ResMed, a sleep therapy and respiratory equipment maker.



What are the challenges facing the OSA and COPD market in India?

In India, awareness is the primary challenge for Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) and Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). India is a sleep deprived country, and most people don't even know about it. As per a recent ResMed's survey of over 5000 individuals, about 55 per cent of Indians have trouble sleeping. However, most have not considered consulting a sleep specialist or resorting to home sleep tests and therapies. Therefore, the foremost and the most important step is to generate awareness about the importance of sleep for overall well-being. Secondly, even though telemedicine is increasingly becoming mainstream and making diagnosis and treatment accessible to some extent, it remains a challenge to remotely

treat patients with chronic symptoms.

Moreover, India is a vast country with a lagging healthcare infrastructure and a population not equipped to depend entirely upon telemedicine. Companies in the private sector and the government are investing to increase the adoption of digital health and build awareness. However, it will be a gradual process for a country like India and will be beneficial for all stakeholders and patients. For example, the Digital Health ID (DHID) launched by the Government of India as a part of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission will go a long way in digitising citizens' healthcare records and building the backend infrastructure for advancing telehealth and telemedicine in communities across India.

How is ResMed addressing these challenges?

ResMed provides the world's most modern, next-generation and cloud-connected solutions for respiratory and sleep care patients. ResMed solutions and therapy devices help keep patients out of the hospital, improve their quality of life, help clinicians monitor and care for them more efficiently. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ResMed continued research, collaboration, and innovation that was needed to drive the development and adoption of digitally connected health services to improve out-of-hospital care. Significant health issues also stem from the lack of awareness, diagnosis, and treatment of sleep-related disorders. To bridge the awareness gap for both the consumers and the medical fraternity of India, ResMed launched awareness initiatives such as the #WakeUpToGoodSleep campaign, highlighting the benefits of good sleep hygiene and the availability of home sleep tests in India. ResMed regularly commissions sleep surveys to increase awareness about the benefits of sleep and inform the healthcare community.

In conjunction with the World Sleep Awareness Day in March 2022, ResMed released the findings of its latest ALA Sleep Survey focused on determining what keeps Indians up and understanding sleep health-related challenges. The study pointed out that Indians take over 90 mins to fall asleep, which is the longest globally in comparison to other survey countries (Japan: 25 mins, China: 42 mins, Korea: 30 mins, Brazil: 44 mins, and Mexico: 34 mins), confirming the pandemic's severe impact on the sleeping habits of India and the need for diagnosis. ResMed's focus is to help people sleep, breathe, and live healthier, high-quality lives through better access to treatments and innovative solutions. The insights from the ResMed's India survey underline the factors impacting sleep and highlight the need for more awareness around sleep disorders so that people struggling with insufficient sleep or poor sleep quality can get diagnosed and seek the right treatment if needed. By enabling better care, ResMed can improve sleep habits and reduce the impact of chronic diseases.

Are you planning to launch new products for the Indian market, for OSA and COPD this year? Please share details.

ResMed focuses on continuing its endeavour to improve the life quality of Indians. We constantly innovate and generate content to help people with the right solutions and awareness around improved sleep health. Additionally, to help healthcare professionals effectively diagnose and manage patients, ResMed has launched multiple products and solutions to support out of hospital care (OHC). For diagnosis, ResMed OneSleepTest is an ideal solution to measure key indicators such as heart rate, oxygen desaturation and body movements to determine sleep quality. For treatment, ResMed's remote monitoring solutions such as AirView enables healthcare professionals to proactively identify patient issues and address them early on or through the treatment journey. ResMed's MyAir is one more such patient friendly platform designed to empower patients to stay engaged with CPAP therapy, which may help reduce call backs and improve efficiency.

Moreover, we have launched a variety of new products to help Indians sleep better, including:

- Eye masks (Silk and Contoured) to block white light,
- Dreampad – a pillow to induce relaxing sleep,
- Dodow – a device emitting blue light to help soothe a racing mind,
- A sound machine that blocks background noises, and
- CPAP Wipes for a fast and easy way to clean CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) masks.

What are your expectations from the Indian government to enhance awareness about OSA and COPD?

The pandemic has surely pushed digital health and telemedicine adoption, with the Ministry of Health, and Family Welfare (MoHFW) issuing the Telemedicine Practice Guidelines in March 2020 to aid the healthcare community during the pandemic. The guidelines created by NITI Aayog included information on the available technology platforms and tools and can ease healthcare delivery. It had frameworks for practising telemedicine in various scenarios including patients, registered medical practitioners, caregivers, health workers and emergencies. It was a step in the right direction which enabled doctors to

effectively help patients; however, a lot more is required.

For OSA, beyond the policies, the Government of India (GOI) should undertake a pan India national campaign to educate Indians about the importance of sleep. India has over 50 million sleep apnea patients, 80 per cent of whom are undiagnosed, as per the Lancet Respiratory Medicine 2019 study. Considering the prevalence, OSA brings about a severe economic burden on the country in such a situation. When it comes to COPD, it is the second leading cause of death worldwide, affecting more than 53 million from India. Due to the vulnerability of the lungs, COPD patients become prone to developing cardiovascular issues, and lung cancer, in case of acute exacerbations and even premature death. The rising AQIs and dipping temperatures coupled with COVID-19 have spotlighted our respiratory health. Given the enormous public health burden, driving awareness around the symptoms, plausible causes and treatment is essential.

Dr Manbeena Chawla

manbeena.chawla@mmactiv.com