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Integrated Health Corridors can deliver quality healthcare across emerging markets

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Accessibility to quality healthcare is commonly regarded as a fundamental human right for every person. This is outlined in the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG3) of the United Nations, which states that we should ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being of all, at all ages.'[1]

However, inequity in health offerings and accessibility to quality healthcare continues to plague our healthcare systems. Many children and adults in low and middle-income countries suffer from insufficient investment in healthcare. According to the World Bank and World Health Organization (WHO), almost half of the globe cannot afford or access essential health services. Further, a WHO report found that there is a lack of 4.3 million healthcare professionals in the world, primarily in South Asia and African countries, with the burden of illness being the highest in such countries. The further lack of financial protection increases the burden of treatment on these families. With almost a third of the human population living in Asia and Africa, it is imperative for these countries to find a way to face the daunting challenge of meeting healthcare needs.

Integrated Health Corridors Driving Greater Access to Quality Care

Integrated care can be seen as one of the solutions to this increased demand for improved patient experience, better health outcomes and specialized patient treatment. With the gap in service delivery in developing countries ever widening, Integrated Health Corridors (IHCs) set up across healthcare networks could address these disparities and strengthen the healthcare offering in South Asia and Africa.

Furthermore, IHCs offer state-of-the-art facilities and medical specialties that help drive greater accessibility to quality healthcare for those most in need. These IHCs can be designed to fill local, national medical capacity gaps and increase

employment while supporting government initiatives targeted towards improving healthcare offering. They can equally boost local retention of professional expertise, and reverse outbound medical tourism trends and medical spending.

One such example of the integrated health corridor bringing positive impact is the story of Abdul Rahman. Abdul was born in a rural village in Pakistan with a hearing impairment. His family were not able to afford the cost of treatment. Due to his disability, he was not able to attend school or even play with other children. In Dec. 2021, the Evercare Foundation paid for him to have Cochlear Implant Surgery at the Evercare Hospital in Lahore. Three months later, the implant was switched on and Abdul was able to hear for the first time! The Evercare Foundation are continuing to support his rehabilitation and speech therapy. Through the Cochlear Implant Program, “HEAR THIS! the Foundation aims to support more vulnerable children born with congenital hearing and speech impairment in Pakistan

Thus, IHCs could provide equitable and well-connected care, robust health surveillance, and enable the resolution of complex medical cases with knowledge sharing across specialties and countries. These IHCs can also focus on targeted interventions for disease management, depending on the needs of the regions. Moreover, they can deliver significant societal and economic benefits by helping to create healthier populations.

Partnerships and Investments in IHCs for Meaningful Change

Focused partnerships and deliberate investments in IHCs can be the key to delivering meaningful change and creating a positive impact for patients in emerging economies and underserved communities. A holistic approach through multidisciplinary care delivery can build the necessary capacity and expertise of the healthcare workforce within institutions. It can also broaden into more integrated support for public health systems such as national and institutional health strategies, standards, and protocols.