Be Healthy Be Mobile: BHBM and mOralHealth

Oral diseases affect half of the world's population and were confirmed to be the most common and preventable Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) worldwide by the Global Burden of Disease 2016 study. The WHO Oral Health Programme work plan 2018-20 to prevent the burden of oral diseases consisted of five main pillars and one of the pillars titled *"Use of digital technology to improve Oral Health"* directly targets digital technology.[1]

In 2017, there were officially more mobile devices than people in the world. The penetration of this technology is globally substantial, as 98.7% of the population of developing countries now has mobile phone subscriptions.[2] This provides an excellent opportunity to use mobile technology for the purpose of improving public health – an approach known as mHealth. mHealth includes the use of mobile devices in collecting aggregate and patient level health data, providing healthcare information to practitioners, researchers, and patients, real time monitoring of patient vitals, and direct provision of care (via mobile telemedicine).[3]

The penetration in India is no longer different, with over 460 million internet users; India is the second largest online market, ranked only behind China. The number of internet users increased by 11.34 % over December 2016 and stood at 481 million in December 2017 which is expected to reach 500 million by 2018. Internet penetration in Urban India was 64.84% in December 2017 when compared to 60.6% in December 2016. In comparison, rural internet penetration has grown from 18% last December to 20.26% in December 2017. By 2021, there will be about 635.8 million internet users in India.[4]

The Be He@lthy, Be Mobile (BHBM) initiative is a collaboration between two UN bodies: the World Health Organisation and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), which are seeking to harness the potential of mHealth. Founded in 2013, the initiative helps governments to introduce health services for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and their risk factors, by using mobile phones to deliver information. BHBM provides technical expertise to support governments who wish to implement mHealth interventions as part of their national health systems.[1]

While the application of mHealth has developed exponentially over recent years, Oral Health remains a neglected area in the implementation of such technology. There has been significant interest from different countries regarding amHealth program focusing on oral health (m-OralHealth). The m-OralHealth strategy comprises the 4 following key components: [1]

1- m-OralHealth Literacy
2- m-OralHealth Training,
3- m-OralHealth early Detection,
4- m-OralHealth Surveillance.

m-OralHealth Global Workshop

The workshop was organised jointly by the WHO-ITU "Be He@lthy, Be Mobile" initiative and the University of Montpellier, France and took place from 10th-12th October 2018 at the University of Montpellier, France. The workshop brought together a group of around 30 participants from government, academia and civil society and offered a unique opportunity for participants from these different sectors to work together and actively contribute to the development of the m-OralHealth Programme.

The participating countries in the m-OralHealth Global Workshop were India, Brazil, France, Senegal, USA, England, Madagascar, Malta, Germany, Switzerland, Netherland, Canada, Estonia, Australia and Scotland.

The objectives of the workshop were:

1- Creation of a draft algorithm for the order in which messages categorized from the draft SMS library according to the target group are sent.
2- Understanding existing technology which may facilitate both development of e-learning platform and development of early detection as well discuss potential methods of implementation.
3- Determination of the indicators to be used for monitoring and evaluation of the mOralHealth programme and design methods of measuring these.
4- Establishment of a network of experts, country representatives and stakeholders who will develop mOralhealth programmes.

The global workshop served as the foundation for the drafting of the global handbook on mobile solutions for Oral Health and country implementation of m-OralHealth programme.[1]

In India, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, in partnership with World Health Organisation and the International Telecommunications started an initiative for utilising mobile technology for tobacco cessation and led the development of **mCessation Programme- Quit Tobacco for Life.** mCessation reaches out to the tobacco users of all categories who want to quit tobacco use and support them towards successful quitting through constant text messaging on mobile phones.[5]

Dr. Prof. O.P.Kharbanda, Chief Center for Dental Education and Research, AIIMS, New Delhi India was invited to participate and represent India to deliver a presentation on *"India - BHBM initiative in India"*.

Dr. Kharbanda presented different interactive mHealth initiatives across the country and the comprehensive website and mobile app on oral health which is likely to be released soon called **eDantSeva**. The National Dental Portal called eDantSeva consists of various features like A-Z topics on oral health including common dental diseases and their treatment, and also informs regarding the prevailing myths and facts about oral health among Indian population. This is the first comprehensive portal to have mapped approximately 300 dental institutes and 1000 hospitals for tracking the dental services nationwide. The development of the portal is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and Center for Dental Education and

Research (CDER), AIIMS, New Delhi which aims to reach ***more than one billion healthy smiles with one click.***

The presentation and the initiatives were highly appreciated by different participants across the globe.

With a rapid increase in the number of mHealth initiatives and a revolutionary growth in technology undoubtedly the mobile based initiatives hold the quickest and widest reach to combat health and oral health problems especially in a developing country like India. In order to ensure that the mOral Health initiatives are effectively utilized, wide-spread awareness about the initiative at regional and state level via different forms of media, regular feedbacks and continuous monitoring must be done.

References:

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