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Appropriate and user friendly choice of technology critical for any public health intervention: An example of vaccine logistics management

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Use of Information Technology (IT) is growing in public health programme but has not percolated to grass-root level in most of the programme in India. Effective use of IT can reduce the time for data flow, initiate timely action and can substantially improve the delivery of public health services. The choice and modality of using IT system is however critical in deciding the success of any such intervention. The focal point of entire immunization programme is availability of vaccines in right quantity for every session. Vaccines are stored in cold chain located from National stores upto small health facilities at villages/towns. Profile of people handling vaccines at various levels is also very vivid ranging from Pharmacist at higher nodes to nurses and mid-wife at lower levels. A single type of technology catering to all nodes is challenging because of differences in infrastructure, electrical supply, internet connections, users profile, education qualification, exposure and capacity to handle devices etc. In our intervention for streamlining vaccine management, users at upper nodes were familiar with use of computers and online access while at lower node had no knowledge or experience in these domains. Mobile phone use was well prevalent at all level but this too had a difference. While the personnel at upper node mostly had an exposure to use smart phone, majority of lower node users have used only basic phones. We, therefore, selected an IT system with flexibility to use computers, smart phones and basic phones at any level. The uptake of this methodology has been promising and successful in real-time management of vaccine stocks at all levels.

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Critical considerations in quality assurance of Indian herbal drugs

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The wealth of India is stored in enormous amount of flora that has been gifted to her. Blessed with varied agro-climatic conditions, India is virtually the Botanical Garden of the World. Ayurveda, the Ancient Science of Life, is practiced in India since time immemorial. For its acceptance across the globe as an effective healthcare system, emphasis is required to be placed on developing quality control parameters for the herbal constituents with the aid of convincing analytical tools. Authenticity of crude drugs, quality assurance of bioactive fractions, microbial load on herbal raw material, metallic impurities of finished herbal formulations, as well as, clinical and toxicity data of herbal ingredients are the major concerns required to be addressed by the Indian herbal drug industry for global acceptance of indigenous medicines. The Indian herbal medicines manufactured in accordance with the provisions of GMP have tremendous potential for global exploitation.

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