



LEGAL, ETHICAL
AND
PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES
IN
INDIAN MEDICAL
PRACTICE AND HEALTHCARE

Editors

Prof. Dr. Geetali Tilak

*Vice-Chancellor,
Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune*

Adv. Dr. Swapnil Bangali

*Founder Partner, Vishwaguru Omicient International Legal
Consultancy & Law Firm, Pune
Vice-President, Legal TM Systems Ltd.*



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Abstract

Every idea in medical ethics and legal norms is informed consent, which denotes the patient's autonomy to select their own medical care. This chapter examines the legal framework pertaining to informed consent in health care, focusing on the existing ideas, the challenges faced by practitioners, and the broader implications for medical law. The principle of informed consent has developed through court rulings, legislation, and professional standards, all designed to guarantee that patients obtain sufficient information to make free and informed choices. This chapter examines the key consequences of valid informed consent, which encompass the

Telemedicine And Medical Negligence: A Legal Analysis In The Indian Context

Seema Ajaykumar Patil*

Abstract

Telemedicine was initially introduced to provide medical care to patients in remote and underserved areas with limited access to healthcare services. However, it has increasingly evolved into a convenient tool for delivering healthcare across various settings. In India, telemedicine has improved access to healthcare and made services more efficient. However, as telemedicine becomes a regular part of healthcare, it also brings new legal and ethical issues in healthcare sector. In the modern healthcare system,

medical negligence in the context of virtual consultations has emerged as a significant concern. This chapter explores the legal framework governing telemedicine and its connection with medical negligence under Indian healthcare law. It examines how established legal principles are applied to tele-consultations and addresses the challenges posed by the digital healthcare environment. The chapter begins with a review of the basic concepts, historical development, and types of telemedicine. It then analyzes the existing legal and regulatory framework, with a focus on the Telemedicine Practice Guidelines, 2020, issued by the Medical Council of India. Using doctrinal and analytical methods, this chapter explores important legal issues related to telemedicine, such as whether informed consent is properly obtained, how the standard of care is maintained, and how medical records are documented during virtual consultations. It also assesses whether current laws are sufficient to deal with these challenges and considers ethical concerns, including patient confidentiality and the changing nature of the doctor-patient relationship in online care.

The chapter offers practical suggestions for legal reforms that aim to enhance regulatory oversight, uphold professional accountability, and protect patient rights, while supporting the responsible development of telemedicine within India's healthcare framework.

Keywords

Telemedicine, Healthcare, Virtual Consultation, Medical Negligence, Telemedicine Practice Guidelines 2020, Informed Consent, Standard of Care.

1. Introduction

Technological advancements have significantly transformed key sectors such as communication, education, healthcare, and business by enhancing connectivity, introducing new

interaction methods, and improving access to essential services. In the healthcare domain, telemedicine has been growing steadily around the world over the past ten years particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Telemedicine emerged as a vital solution to minimize physical contact and reduce health risks. During the pandemic, lockdowns, many people turned to online consultations as a safe and convenient way to receive medical care. To support this shift, the Indian government introduced the Telemedicine Practice Guidelines in March 2020, officially recognizing and regulating telemedicine services in the country. These developments have enabled millions of patients, especially in rural and underserved areas, to access healthcare services with greater convenience and reduced cost.

By utilizing video conferencing and other digital tools, telemedicine enables remote consultations, thereby saving time and alleviating the cost burden on both patients and healthcare providers. Furthermore, this innovation also made hospital work more efficient and helped provide better follow-up care by allowing doctors to monitor patients remotely even after they are discharged from the hospital. While telemedicine has the potential to make healthcare more accessible, affordable, and convenient, it also presents complex legal challenges, particularly concerning medical negligence. As telemedicine continues to grow, there are increasing legal and ethical concerns about ensuring the safety and quality of virtual medical care.

Traditionally, medical negligence is understood as the breach of a duty of care by a medical professional, resulting in injury or harm to a patient. However, when transposed into the realm of telemedicine, these well-established legal principles become significantly more complex to apply. The absence of physical examination limited diagnostic tools, reliance on digital communication, and data privacy risks all contribute to a grey area in determining the standard of care and potential liability. The virtual nature of telemedicine also complicates issues like informed consent, identity verification, documentation, and prescription compliance.

In the present paper, the researchers analyze the legal challenges surrounding medical negligence in the context of telemedicine. The chapter highlights the importance of continuously evolving legal frameworks that can effectively address emerging issues in virtual consultations. Furthermore, it advocates for a proactive legal approach that not only responds to current challenges but also anticipates and mitigates potential risks in the future, ensuring that telemedicine can develop safely and responsibly.

2. Meaning and Definition of Telemedicine

Telemedicine refers to providing healthcare services through digital technologies and communication networks, enabling interactions between healthcare professionals and patients

across geographical boundaries. It encompasses a broad range of services, including health promotion, disease prevention, clinical diagnosis, timely referrals, patient management, and follow-up care.

Telemedicine has become a transformative tool in modern healthcare, which makes healthcare more accessible, cost-effective, and promotes greater patient engagement. Originating in the late 1950s, its evolution has significantly improved healthcare delivery, particularly for the elderly, by enabling them to receive medical care from the comfort of their homes, thus supporting aging in place. Additionally, telemedicine has proven especially beneficial for patients in rural and underserved areas, offering virtual access to physicians and specialists that were previously difficult to reach due to geographic and infrastructural limitations. A virtual consultation is a process where medical advice or an opinion is available without physically visiting a healthcare specialist. It also enables physicians to communicate with one another through digital platforms, allowing them to review and discuss electronic medical records during the consultation process.

Telemedicine enables real time information exchange between physicians and patients via digital platforms, allowing both parties to view and share data simultaneously. It also facilitates remote monitoring by capturing and transmitting readings from medical devices located at remote sites. With telemedicine software, patients can consult with doctors for diagnosis and treatment without long waiting periods or the need for in-person appointments. This convenience allows patients to access medical care from the comfort and safety of their homes.¹

Telemedicine means 'healing from a distance'. The World Health Organization defines telemedicine as "the provision of health services by health professionals, where distance is a critical factor, using information and communication technologies to exchange valid information for the purposes of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease and injury, research and evaluation, and to facilitate the continuing education of health professionals, with the aim of safeguarding the health of individuals and communities.

3. Aims of Telemedicine

The main purpose of telemedicine and virtual consultation is to provide quality healthcare services to everyone who requires them. This includes facilitating access to healthcare to both privileged and underprivileged populations, providing faster, cheaper, and better communication for treatment, follow-up by experts and to store records. It helps remove geographical barriers to healthcare, especially by reaching distant areas poorly connected by any means of transport.

Telemedicine offers significant advantages in most circumstances, particularly by enhancing access to healthcare services in remote or underserved areas and for individuals with mobility challenges, such as the elderly. By overcoming geographical barriers, telemedicine serves as a vital tool in expanding the reach of medical care.

It also has the potential to reduce healthcare costs and save time for both patients and caregivers. With the advancement of telemedicine, healthcare providers and institutions can consult with specialists regardless of their physical location, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration. Furthermore, it facilitates more frequent and convenient interactions between patients and healthcare professionals, which may strengthen the doctor-patient relationship and improve patient adherence. Enhanced follow-up care through telemedicine may also contribute to better health outcomes. Collectively, these factors underscore the potential of telemedicine to improve the delivery and efficiency of healthcare services on a broader scale.

4. Historical Development of Telemedicine

Telemedicine gained significant popularity in India during 2020–21 due to the restrictions and challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the concept of telemedicine is not new. Its origins can be traced back to the American Civil War, when medical officers used telegraph communication to request medical supplies over long distances.

In 1879, *The Lancet* published an account of a doctor diagnosing a child's illness over the telephone, marking one of the earliest known uses of telecommunication in medicine. In 1906, Willem Einthoven remotely recorded electrocardiograms and used the term "telecardiogram" introducing the concept of remote medical diagnostics. In 1920, Haukeland Hospital in Bergen, Norway, implemented a radio-based communication system to offer clinical guidance to ships at sea, laying the groundwork for early remote medical care. Inspired by such advancements, other Western European nations soon adopted similar initiatives. A few years later, in 1925, science fiction writer Hugo Gernsback envisioned a device he called the "teledactyl," which he predicted would be available by 1975. This device, he imagined, would enable physicians to examine and treat patients remotely using a video interface and robotic arms. The 1960s brought significant progress in this field, with a notable breakthrough occurring in Nebraska, where closed-circuit television was used to conduct psychiatric consultations marking one of the first documented uses of video technology in telemedicine. Simultaneously, NASA's telemetry systems for transmitting biometric data from animals aboard space missions to scientists on Earth laid the groundwork for future telemedicine technologies.

Telemedicine activities in India began in 1999, although the government officially acknowledged its potential in 2000–01 when ISRO collaborated with Apollo Telemedicine Enterprises to launch satellite-based services, connecting Apollo Hospital, Chennai, with a rural facility in Aragonda, Andhra Pradesh. In 2001, India established its first telemedicine network linking AIIMS New Delhi, PGIMER Chandigarh, and SGPGIMS Lucknow. In 2020, telemedicine in India received a significant boost with the release of the Telemedicine Practice Guidelines. During the pandemic, the Government of India also launched the e-Sanjeevani platform and announced the National Digital Health Mission now known as the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission aimed at transforming the country's digital healthcare system.

5. Types of Telemedicine

Telemedicine encompasses the use of digital technologies to provide healthcare remotely. The primary types include:

1. *Real-Time (Synchronous) Telemedicine*: Involves live video conferencing between patients and healthcare providers for consultations, diagnoses, and follow-up care. It improves access for individuals in remote or underserved areas.
2. *Store-and-Forward (Asynchronous) Telemedicine*: Entails the transmission of medical data (e.g., images, test results) for later assessment by a specialist. Commonly used in dermatology, radiology, and pathology.
3. *Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM)*: Utilizes electronic devices to track patients' health metrics (e.g., blood pressure, glucose levels) in real-time. It is particularly effective for managing chronic diseases.
4. *Mobile Health (mHealth)*: Involves the use of mobile apps and devices for health education, medication reminders, and virtual care. It enhances patient engagement and healthcare accessibility.

6. Legal Framework Governing Telemedicine in India

Telemedicine combines information and communication technologies (ICTs) with medical science. The government of India has acknowledged it and incorporated it into various schemes and policies. Currently, the laws governing telemedicine in India consist of those regulating the medical profession and information technology.

The following Regulations regulate the practice of telemedicine in India.

6.1 National Medical Commission Act, 2019 and Telemedicine

The National Medical Commission Act, 2019, which was notified in September 2020, constitutes the principal legislative framework governing medical education and practice in India. This Act repealed the Indian Medical Council Act of 1956; however, it allows for the continuation of existing regulations under the previous statute until such time as new rules are introduced. Among these continuing regulations is the Medical Council of India (MCI) Code of 2002, which outlines the ethical and professional responsibilities of medical practitioners, including provisions related to telemedicine. In August 2023, the NMC issued a new Professional Conduct Regulation (NMC Code), including revised Telemedicine Guidelines, replacing the 2020 version.

6.2 Telemedicine Practice Guidelines ("TPG") Issued under the MCI Code

The Telemedicine Practice Guidelines were released on March 20, 2020, by the Board of Governors, appointed by the Central Government in place of the Medical Council of India, in collaboration with NITI Aayog.

These guidelines empower medical practitioners to deliver telemedicine services across the country, offering clear directions on the scope of permissible care and the appropriate methods for delivery. They not only legitimize the practice but also establish a standardized framework to ensure that teleconsultations are conducted ethically, responsibly, and in accordance with the professional duties of Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs).

7. Telemedicine Practice Guidelines - Features

7.1 Any Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP) whose name appears in either the State Medical Register or the Indian Medical Register is authorized to provide telemedicine consultations. Currently, no additional qualifications are required; however, the government plans to introduce a mandatory online training program in the future for RMPs wishing to practice telemedicine.

7.2 Mode of Telemedicine: The selection of the teleconsultation mode whether audio, video, or text is left to the professional judgment of the RMP which is based on the nature of the clinical issue, the patient's condition, and resource availability. An in-person consultation may be advised if deemed clinically necessary.

7.3 Consent: Consent plays a crucial role in telemedicine practice. If a patient initiates the consultation, their consent is presumed to be implied. However, in cases where the Regis-

tered Medical Practitioner initiates the teleconsultations, it is necessary to obtain the patient's explicit consent beforehand. This can be recorded through email, text message, or verbal confirmation via phone or video.

7.4 Prescribing Medicines: Telemedicine prescriptions carry the same responsibility as in-person ones and require a proper diagnosis. RMPs can prescribe over-the-counter drugs (List O), low-risk first-time medications (List A), and refills (List B). Prescribing Schedule X drugs or narcotics and Psychotropic substances listed in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, is strictly prohibited. Prescriptions must follow Indian Medical Council regulations, include the RMP's registration number, and be sent to the patient as a signed or electronic copy.

7.5 Ethics and Confidentiality: Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs) are required to adhere to the ethical principles and professional standards outlined in the Indian Medical Council Act, ensuring the protection of patient privacy and confidentiality. These obligations equally apply to the use of technological platforms in telemedicine, where RMPs must exercise due diligence to prevent any breach of patient information.

7.6 Misconduct: Compelling teleconsultations against patient preference, misuse of patient data, and advertising telemedicine are considered professional misconduct for Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs) and punishable under the IMC Act and related laws.

7.7 Documentation: RMPs are obligated to maintain comprehensive records of teleconsultations, including patient history and prescriptions, in the same manner as required for face-to-face consultations.

7.8 Fees: Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs) may charge a reasonable fee for telemedicine services and must provide the patient with a receipt or invoice.

7.9 Emergencies: In medical emergencies, patients should be advised to seek immediate in-person care. RMPs are responsible for offering first aid guidance, counselling, and appropriate referrals.

8. The Information Technology Act, 2000: The Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act) serves as the principal legislation governing data protection and privacy in India. It outlines legal obligations concerning the collection, storage, and protection of sensitive personal data or information (SPDI), which explicitly includes health-related data. Section 43A mandates reasonable security practices to protect such data, making telemedicine platforms liable for breaches. Section 72A penalizes unauthorized disclosure of personal information, holding healthcare providers accountable for sharing patient data without consent.

9. **The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act):** The Act was enacted to safeguard individuals' data and privacy, responding to increasing concerns about data misuse and security in the digital age, especially with the growing use of online platforms. In the landmark judgment *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*(1), the Supreme Court affirmed that the right to privacy is a fundamental right under the Constitution. This decision laid the foundation for addressing emerging challenges brought about by rapid digitalization, including the expanding domain of telemedicine. It plays a pivotal role in safeguarding patient privacy, regulating the secure handling of sensitive health data, and fostering public trust in digital healthcare services.

10. **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 ("D&C Act") and Drugs Rules, 1945 (Drugs Rules):**

The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the Drugs Rules, 1945, provide a legal framework for regulating the manufacture, sale, import, and distribution of drugs in India. Unlike many foreign jurisdictions with a clear over-the-counter (OTC) category, Indian law mandates that all drugs be sold under a license, with exceptions listed under Schedule K of the Drugs Rules. These include certain household remedies, antimalarials, and disinfectants, among others. Prescription drugs are categorized under Schedules H, H1, and X, and can only be dispensed with a valid prescription signed and dated by a registered medical practitioner, stating patient details and the quantity prescribed. In May 2022, a draft amendment proposed allowing 16 specific drugs, such as paracetamol and povidone-iodine, to be sold without prescription, signalling a move towards recognizing a regulated OTC category in India.

1. Meaning and Definition of Medical Negligence

Ordinary negligence is the failure to take reasonable care that a prudent person would be expected to take under similar conditions. It involves either not doing something a careful person would have done or doing something that a careful and reasonable person would not have done. In the context of the medical profession, a doctor may be held liable for negligence on either of two grounds: first, if they lack the requisite skill they claim to possess; or second, if they fail to exercise the skill they do possess with reasonable competence in a particular case.

Prof. Winfield defines, 'Negligence is a specific tort involving the breach of legal duty to exercise reasonable care, resulting in harm to the plaintiff that was unintended by the defendant'.

1. AIR 2017 SC 4161.

In the context of healthcare, medical negligence refers to any act or omission by medical practitioners or hospital staff that falls below the accepted standard of care and directly causes injury, illness, or deterioration of a patient's health. Medical negligence is recognized as one of the most critical and sensitive legal challenges faced by healthcare providers.

In the medical field, medical negligence remains one of the most sensitive legal issues faced by healthcare professionals. The term medical negligence is a broad, umbrella expression commonly used to refer to acts of professional misconduct, carelessness, or omissions committed by medical practitioners in the course of their professional duties. Negligence in the medical field may occur at various stages, such as diagnosing, treating, or advising patients. These acts often result in physical, mental, or financial harm to the patient. Therefore, medical negligence is considered a deviation from the standard of care that is expected from a competent and reasonable medical professional.

12. Medical Negligence in Telemedicine

Medical negligence in telemedicine represents an emerging dimension within the broader scope of medical negligence. Telemedicine is a way of providing healthcare online that creates a relationship between doctor and patient similar to the traditional method of care. Consequently, patients have the right to expect that healthcare providers maintain the same standards of care during virtual consultations as they would in traditional settings.

The rapid expansion of telemedicine, especially accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has transformed healthcare delivery by allowing medical consultations through digital platforms. This shift presents unique legal and ethical challenges, especially in terms of medical negligence. While traditional principles of medical negligence remain the foundation, their telemedicine application requires careful consideration due to the virtual nature of the interaction, limited physical examination, and technological factors.

The Bombay High Court in *Deepa Sanjeev Pawaskar v. State of Maharashtra*⁽²⁾ supported this need for an adequate framework for the legality of telemedicine. In this case, husband and wife, who were doctors by profession, were held liable for criminal negligence since it was ordered that the patient be hospitalized without the presence of doctors, and drugs were given according to telephonic orders. Furthermore, there was no on-site medical practitioner. The patient eventually died as the staff formed a different strategy for a doctor, due to which the practitioner was held liable as he took the risk of acting recklessly and without regard for the repercussions.

2. AIROnline 2018 Bom 432.

13. Prohibited Conduct in Telemedicine Practice: Ethical and Legal Dimensions

The MCI Code offers general guidelines on what constitutes professional misconduct by doctors. However, for cases of misconduct specifically related to telemedicine, one must refer to the Telemedicine Practice Guidelines (TPG), which outlines the rules and standards for ethical and legal telemedicine practice. According to TPG, the following actions would be considered misconduct in the medical profession. If a Registered Medical Practitioner is found guilty of misconduct, the penalties under the MCI Act and the MCI Code are applicable. These rules are intended to ensure ethical medical practice, protect patient rights, and uphold professional standards. The following acts are expressly prohibited:

13.1 Prescription without Diagnosis: The prescription of medicines in the absence of an appropriate diagnosis or provisional diagnosis is considered a serious breach of clinical protocol and may endanger patient safety. The guidelines emphasize that remote consultations must adhere to the same diagnostic diligence as in-person care.

13.2 Breach of Patient Confidentiality: Failure to protect patient privacy and confidentiality, as mandated under the MCI Act, constitutes professional misconduct. Medical practitioners are obligated to ensure secure communication channels and maintain strict confidentiality of patient data.

13.3 Non-Compliance with Legal Frameworks: Any violation of relevant legal provisions, including the MCI Act, the MCI Code of Ethics, the Information Technology Act, 2000, or forthcoming legislation such as the Data Protection Bill, particularly in the context of storing, handling, or transferring medical information, is strictly prohibited.

13.4 Disregard for Patient Autonomy: It is impermissible for a Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP) to insist on telemedicine consultation when the patient expresses a preference for, or is capable of accessing, in-person medical services. Patient autonomy in choosing the mode of consultation must be respected.

13.5 Misuse of Patient Data and Images: The unethical use of patient data, including the sharing or uploading of private or sensitive images on public platforms such as social media, is regarded as a gross violation of medical ethics and privacy rights.

13.6 Prescription of Restricted Medications : RMPs are prohibited from prescribing drugs included in the restricted or prohibited categories through telemedicine, especially during the first consultation. This includes medications listed under List B or other controlled substances.

13.7 Unethical Solicitation of Patients: The solicitation of patients through advertisements, inducements, or other promotional methods for the purpose of attracting telemedicine consultations is deemed unethical and is explicitly restricted under the TPG.

14. Challenges in Assessing Liability in Virtual Healthcare Delivery

The evolution of telemedicine has expanded the scope and efficiency of healthcare delivery. However, this shift also raises significant legal and ethical concerns, particularly in relation to medical negligence. As technology becomes an integral part of patient care, it introduces both advantages and new responsibilities for healthcare providers.

The following are some challenges of telemedicine

14.1 Informed Consent: Consent from the patient is an integral part of the medical profession. In virtual modes of service, sometimes patients may not fully comprehend the treatment process, the technological tools employed, and the associated risks compared to traditional methods. Thus, if patients feel insufficiently informed about their care, it is known as inadequate informed consent procedures, which may result in legal claims.

14.2 Diagnostic Limitations: Telemedicine inherently reduces the scope for conducting physical examinations, which are often important for accurate clinical assessment. Consequently, healthcare professionals must primarily depend on patient-reported information, readings from digital health devices, and visual evaluations conducted through video consultations. Sometimes, due to digital interruptions and technical issues, the system may not function properly. This constraint increases the risk of diagnostic inaccuracies and potential errors.

14.3 Licensing and Jurisdiction Issues: Healthcare providers are required to hold a valid license in the state where the patient is physically located during the consultation. Non-compliance with state licensing regulations may result in legal challenges and increase the risk of malpractice claims.

14.4 Privacy and Security Concerns: The use of telemedicine involves transmitting confidential patient data over communication networks, which carries inherent risks of unauthorized access and data breaches, potentially resulting in privacy violations and harm to patient care.

14.5 Standard of Care in Telemedicine: Setting the right standard of care in telemedicine can be challenging, as it depends on both the patient's medical needs and the strengths and

limits of the technology used. Healthcare providers must make sure that the quality of care remains high and is not compromised when offering treatment remotely.

14.6 Technical challenges: Problems such as poor internet connectivity, software glitches, or hardware failures can significantly affect the quality of interaction between healthcare providers and patients. These disruptions may result in miscommunication, incomplete assessments, or even errors in diagnosis and treatment, thereby impacting the overall effectiveness and reliability of telemedicine services. Healthcare professionals engaged in telemedicine must address these challenges by utilizing secure and efficient technological platforms, ensuring adherence to applicable legal and regulatory standards, maintaining effective communication with patients, and keeping detailed records of all consultations and treatments. These measures are essential in reducing the likelihood of malpractice claims within the telemedicine framework.

15. Steps to Overcome the Problems of Telemedicine in India

15.1 Comprehensive and Specific Legislation: Currently, India lacks specific legislation regulating the practice of telemedicine. The existing legal framework depends on general laws that broadly govern the practice of medicine and the use of web-based information technology. However, these provisions are inadequate to address the unique legal, ethical, and professional challenges posed by telemedicine. In response to the increasing demand for remote healthcare services—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic the Government of India introduced the Telemedicine Practice Guidelines (TPG), 2020. These guidelines represent the first official legal framework allowing Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs) to provide healthcare services via telemedicine. The TPG applies to all RMPs operating within India's jurisdiction and aims to establish a uniform standard of practice in this evolving field.

However, the applicability of these guidelines is limited. They apply only to practitioners registered under the Indian Medical Council (MCI) Act and do not extend to dentists, allied healthcare professionals, or other entities involved in providing telemedicine services. This narrow scope results in regulatory gaps and ambiguity in legal responsibilities, particularly concerning the duties, liabilities, and legal protections of medical professionals engaged in teleconsultations. Thus, to address these concerns, there is an urgent need for comprehensive and specific legislation, such as a Telemedicine Act, to regulate all aspects of telemedicine practice in India.

15.2 Confidentiality, Data Security, and Cyber Law Compliance: Addressing challenges in telemedicine requires a robust regulatory framework that safeguards data privacy, patient autonomy, and informed consent. This framework should en-

sure the maintenance of accurate, user-controlled health records, implement secure access protocols, anonymize data where appropriate, provide training for stakeholders on ethical data handling, and mandate regular compliance audits. Such measures promote a rights-based, patient-centric approach to digital healthcare delivery. Furthermore, a strong rights-based framework is critical to regulate the use of individual health data by third-party medical software. This framework must guarantee transparency, data confidentiality, and cyber security through clear data-sharing agreements that protect patient rights and data ownership.

15.3 Collaboration between the government and private players: Collaboration between the government and private players is essential to making telemedicine affordable and efficient. The government can enhance digital infrastructure, provide policy support, and integrate telemedicine with public health schemes to improve accessibility. Meanwhile, private players can offer innovative, low-cost platforms, ensure seamless services through tech integration, and promote awareness. A strong public-private partnership will help bridge healthcare gaps, especially in rural areas, and make telemedicine a sustainable and inclusive healthcare solution.

15.4 Use of Advanced Technologies: Advanced technology plays a crucial role in transforming healthcare through telemedicine. There is a growing need to leverage advanced applications such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), data analytics, the Internet of Medical Things (IoMT), cloud computing, block chain, robotics, and computer vision. These technologies can enhance diagnostic accuracy, personalize treatment, enable remote monitoring, secure patient data, and improve overall efficiency in teleconsultations. For example, AI can assist in early disease detection, while IoMT devices help monitor patients in real time from remote locations. Cloud and block chain ensure secure, scalable storage and transmission of medical data.

15.5 Equality in Services: Telemedicine services must be inclusive and accessible to all, including individuals in rural areas, low-income groups, and digitally unskilled communities. Achieving these goals requires building digital infrastructure in underserved regions, providing multilingual and low-tech solutions, and training both healthcare providers and patients to use digital tools effectively. Only by combining innovation with inclusivity can telemedicine truly revolutionize healthcare for everyone.

15.6 Universal access to quality healthcare: To ensure quality, safety, and global interoperability, Telehealth standards in India must conform to international benchmarks. Digital health will gain value and widespread adoption if it ensures accessibility and promotes equitable, universal access to quality healthcare. It must improve the efficiency and sustainability of health systems by delivering affordable, inclusive, and high-quality care. Moreover, it should reinforce every component of healthcare such as health promotion.

disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care throughout all stages of public health emergencies, while ensuring the protection and confidentiality of patient data.

16. Conclusion

Telemedicine is a relatively new concept for many healthcare providers in India. It was initially introduced to improve access to medical care in remote and underserved areas. With the rise of technology and the growing demand from a tech-savvy population, it quickly gained significance. Telemedicine has become an integral and trusted mode of delivering healthcare in India, offering timely, affordable, and accessible services to both patients and medical professionals. Its widespread adoption has significantly improved the efficiency and reach of the healthcare system. Nonetheless, this advancement also presents complex legal and ethical challenges, particularly in areas such as medical negligence, standards of care, informed consent, and the evolving nature of the doctor patient relationship.

The study's findings indicate that the successful integration of telemedicine into mainstream healthcare depends on establishing a strong, comprehensive legal framework. This framework must clearly define standards for ethical conduct, medical liability, and patient safety to promote accountability and responsible practice. Additionally, the adoption of advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Medical Things, cloud computing, and block chain is essential to improve diagnostic accuracy, secure patient data, and enhance telemedicine's overall efficiency. Equally important is ensuring telemedicine's accessibility to all, including rural and low-income populations, through improved digital infrastructure and targeted training for healthcare providers and patients. Aligning India's telehealth practices with global standards will further ensure affordable, high-quality healthcare is accessible nationwide. With such legal clarity, telemedicine can achieve its full potential in enhancing healthcare delivery while upholding the essential legal and ethical principles of medical care.

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