

Information technology to provide 'Health care' for all

Health care for all

Nepal is a poor country with limited human resources and medical centres. Moreover, most of the country has difficult terrain with poor transportation system. In this context, 'Health for all' will only remain a slogan unless new concepts are utilised to overcome these problems. They should not only be practicable but available, and sustainable as well.

Health care for all with information technology solution

Use of 'Information Technology' in health care is not a new concept. It has been used widely in many countries around the world. Though it has been used in Nepal by some institutions recently, it is yet to be adopted in large scale to provide real benefit to the needy population lying in the rural areas. The aim of the use of 'Information Technology' in health care is to provide help of senior consultants and specialists to even the remotest health care facility so that those needing proper care can be identified early and sent to a tertiary centre. Over the decade, 'Information Technology' has developed greatly in this country and it is relatively cheap. With the coverage of telephone network throughout the country, decreasing price of hardware and the development of enough human resources, it is now a reality.

The district hospitals can obtain internet connection, computer and a camera. They can request a hospital in

Kathmandu or other higher centres for consultations on medical problems.

Telemedicine is already being used in some parts of the remote areas of Nepal successfully. Thus, this is not a new technology but most people still do not want to think outside the box for making policies to use telemedicine regularly.

Information Technology will help:

- The patient to avoid spending time and money to come to Kathmandu for diseases that can be treated right in the district and also avoid not getting medical service because of frequent bandhs or difficult terrain or even finance.
- The doctor to upgrade his/her knowledge (CME with higher centres), help treat difficult cases and not feel isolated in the remote areas. This may also help to retain medical personnel in the districts for certain period of times.

Although there is more and more interest in Telemedicine and although individuals/agencies are doing it on their own initiatives, it is high time the government stepped in and made policies aimed at providing Health for all through information technology. Only then will the public feel the full impact of the slogan 'Health for all'.