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**DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE  
HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY:  
BUDGET 2022**



The budget for 2022 has seen two significant announcements for the healthcare industry.

#### ✚ **National Tele Mental Health Program**

The first is the establishment of a National Tele Mental Health Program, which will consist of a network of 23 tele-mental health with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) at the apex.

Access to mental health care, while recognized as a right under the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017<sup>1</sup>, remains a challenge even at a time when the prevalence of mental health issues is at a record high<sup>2</sup>. The Mental Healthcare Act specifically mandates that every person must have access to quality mental health services - both inpatient and outpatient - at an affordable price, which should be geographically accessible to them. The central and state governments have been tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that this right is realized. The implementation of the National Tele Mental Health Program will go a long in ensuring unfettered access to quality mental health services irrespective of the patient's geographical location and levels of mobility.

The range of conditions for which treatment may be accessed through the program would be defined by the restrictions under the Telemedicine Practice Guidelines, 2020<sup>3</sup>, and the drugs which may be prescribed thereunder<sup>4</sup>. However, the commonly seen conditions would be capable of being treated via telemedicine, and the program will substantially reduce the burden on the infrastructure for in-clinic mental health services.

#### ✚ **National Digital Health Ecosystem**

The second key development is the announcement of an open platform for the National Digital Health Ecosystem which includes the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (previously called Health ID), consent framework, and the two digital registries that have been envisaged: the healthcare professionals registry which will be a detailed repository of professionals practicing both modern and Indian medicine, and the health facility registry, which will consist of all public and private hospitals, clinics, diagnostic and imaging centres and pharmacies.

The platform will facilitate patient access to healthcare service providers and other healthcare facilities and will provide a seamless digitization process for patient records.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 18 of the Mental Healthcare Act

<sup>2</sup> 10.6% of Indians reportedly suffer from mental disorders (as [reported](#) to the Rajya Sabha)

<sup>3</sup> Accessible [here](#); NIMHANS Telepsychiatry Operational Guidelines (accessible [here](#))

<sup>4</sup> Modification of list of medicines for psychiatric practice (accessible [here](#))



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