

Emphasise economic, environmental and healthcare sustainability

HEALTHCARE systems throughout most parts of the world have faced the worst disruptions.

They have been constantly overwhelmed since SARS-CoV-2 infections were declared a pandemic in early 2020.

A heavy toll has fallen on healthcare professionals who have to walk the extra mile to care for Covid-19 patients.

The rapid rise in the number of Covid-19 patients requiring hospital admissions has outnumbered the availability of supporting facilities such as beds, ventilators and emergency care equipment.

The care for non-Covid patients is also significantly affected. Healthcare systems appeared unable to sustain the need of caring for the people during the toughest period of the pandemic.

We must address the three aspects of healthcare sustainability to ensure the health needs of future generations will be met.

First is economic sustainability. Public healthcare facilities need to manage the financial aspect of sustainability. This includes budgeting through proper strategic planning.



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This is followed by accountable and transparent management of funds. Funds have to be generated through healthcare services, healthcare courses and prevention of resource wastage.

The hospital's facility is the best place to train medical undergraduate and postgraduate students by collaborating with private medical institutions to generate revenue.

The facility can provide hands-on training for healthcare management courses. Public hospitals can also provide affordable private-patient care to complement private healthcare services.

During a crisis, both public and private hospitals can support each other for the benefit of the people. When the time is right,

more public hospitals should be built to expand the facilities to create new job and business opportunities.

The intakes of housemen and postgraduate students can be increased to meet the need of future specialists.

Investing in technology will facilitate the operational management, which in the long run will enhance patient care, save lives and reduce costs.

When the healthcare facility has created surplus revenue, it can improve the infrastructure, equipment, staff development, engaging the community and most importantly to meet "rainy days" to safely navigate through future health crises.

Second, environmental sustainability should be emphasised in hospital operations.

The world continues to suffer from the wrath of global warming, causing drastic climate change resulting in unprecedented natural disasters.

These have brought much suffering to humanity, which includes loss of lives, loss of property, damage to infrastructure, disruption of economic activi-

ties, loss of livelihoods, altering the ecosystem, and overworked healthcare system.

Healthcare services are one of the main contributors to environmental pollution. So, healthcare facilities must embrace sustainability practices through the 6 "R's" (Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle, Rethink and Refuse).

Installing solar panels to generate renewable energy will help reduce the use of electricity generated by fossil fuel. The solar electricity generated can be sold to produce income for the facility.

Rainwater harvesting will help reduce the use of water from outside supply and reduce water expenses. The use of environment-friendly disposable medical items must be adopted to facilitate waste management.

Biohazard materials can be incinerated to produce usable energy that will supplement energy supply.

The use of nitrous oxide in the operation theatres must be stopped because it is one of the major causes of greenhouse-related emissions that contribute to global warming.

Protecting the environment

will protect the ecosystem. It will also prevent disruption that causes migration of microbes looking for new hosts and spreading diseases to human.

It is very important for a healthcare facility to champion the practice of environmental sustainability by engaging its staff, patients and the community through education and social programmes.

Third, achieving healthcare sustainability depends on understanding the power of people working together towards environmental sustainability.

Employees are the most important asset to an organisation. So efforts must be taken to select, develop and nurture talents.

This will create loyal, hard-working and professional workforce where employees are job-fit and organisation-fit to achieve sustainability goals.

Engaging and educating the community will help to improve the delivery of healthcare and prevent diseases.

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