

SeHAT Initiative 2021, Launch, Telemedicine in India

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SeHAT Initiative is a digital healthcare service launched by the Ministry of Defence to provide remote medical consultation to armed forces personnel and their families. The scheme was introduced on May 27, 2021. It reflects the government's Digital India vision and e-governance approach. It gained importance during COVID 19 by ensuring safe, contactless healthcare access through online platforms, reducing physical hospital visits and improving service delivery efficiency across the country.

SeHAT Initiative

SeHAT is a tri-services teleconsultation platform providing free remote healthcare access to defence personnel and families nationwide through digital devices.

- **Launch and Objective:** The SeHAT Initiative was launched on May 27, 2021 by Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh under the **Ministry of Defence** to deliver healthcare services at home and strengthen **digital governance** in medical services.
- **Full Form:** The full form for the SeHAT stands for "**Services e-Health Assistance and Teleconsultation**".
- **Target Beneficiaries:** It is designed for all entitled serving personnel, ex-servicemen and their dependents, ensuring comprehensive healthcare coverage beyond active military members across different regions of

India.

- **Digital Platform Features:** The system enables patient to doctor consultation using smartphones, laptops, desktops or tablets, with simultaneous video, audio and chat options ensuring interactive and structured clinical communication.
- **Free Accessibility:** Users can access teleconsultation services without any payment through the official portal at “**sehatopd.gov.in**” or mobile applications available on Play Store and App Store, making healthcare affordable.
- **Achievements:** Since its launch, SeHAT has recorded more than 10,000 successful teleconsultations and onboarded over 2000 doctors, demonstrating its expanding reach and operational effectiveness.
- **Medicine Delivery Service:** From February 1, 2022, the initiative introduced home delivery or self pickup of medicines, starting with Base Hospital Delhi Cantt, improving last mile healthcare service delivery.
- **Development Agencies:** The platform was developed through collaboration among **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)**, **Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS)**, **Integrated Defence Staff (IDS)** and **C-DAC Mohali**.

Telemedicine in India

Telemedicine in India uses digital technology to provide remote healthcare services, improving access, reducing costs and addressing doctor shortages effectively nationwide.

- **Concept and Functioning:** Telemedicine enables healthcare delivery through telecommunications and information technology, allowing patients to consult doctors remotely without physical visits, saving time and travel costs significantly.
- **Rural Importance:** Around 70% of India’s population lives in rural areas, where telemedicine helps bridge healthcare gaps by providing specialist consultations in regions lacking advanced medical infrastructure.
- **Doctor Shortage Solution:** India has about 0.7 physicians per 1000 people, making telemedicine essential to extend medical expertise efficiently compared to higher ratios in countries like China and Russia.
- **Early Initiatives:** ISRO launched a Telemedicine Pilot Project in 2001 connecting urban hospitals with rural centres, laying the foundation for digital healthcare expansion across multiple states.
- **Policy Support:** **Telemedicine Practice Guidelines** released in March 2020 legally enabled doctors to provide remote consultations, accelerating adoption during the COVID 19 pandemic.
- **Government Integration:** Telemedicine aligns with **Digital India** and integrates with initiatives like **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission**, creating a unified digital health ecosystem across the country.
- **Specialized Services:** Various branches such as teledermatology, telepsychiatry, teleradiology and telecardiology enable targeted remote diagnosis and treatment for diverse medical conditions.

SeHAT Initiative Significance

SeHAT Initiative enhances healthcare accessibility, ensures contactless consultations, reduces hospital burden and strengthens digital health infrastructure for defence personnel nationwide effectively.

- **Improved Accessibility:** SeHAT allows patients to consult doctors from home, eliminating geographical barriers and ensuring timely medical advice, especially for personnel posted in remote or difficult terrains.

- **Pandemic Response:** During **COVID 19**, it provided safe and contactless consultations, minimizing infection risks while maintaining continuity of healthcare services for defence communities.
- **Healthcare Efficiency:** By reducing unnecessary hospital visits, SeHAT decreases patient load in hospitals, allowing better management of critical cases and optimal utilization of healthcare resources.
- **User Friendly Design:** The platform is simple and easy to use, requiring minimal effort, ensuring even non technical users can access healthcare services without difficulty or confusion.
- **Integrated Service Model:** Based on the model of **eSanjeevani**, it combines consultation, diagnosis and medicine delivery, creating a comprehensive digital healthcare solution within a single platform.
- **Strengthening Digital India:** The initiative supports the Digital India mission by promoting e-governance, digital infrastructure and technology driven public service delivery in the healthcare sector.
- **Last Mile Delivery:** The introduction of home delivery and self pickup of medicines ensures complete treatment support, making healthcare truly accessible at the patient's doorstep.

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