

POLICY REVIEW

Telemedicine expanded to rural areas

Nation to bridge healthcare gaps between cities and countryside

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Measures have been unveiled to bolster the nation's telemedicine network to improve epidemic prevention measures at the grassroots and raise access to healthcare in less-developed areas.

A policy document, issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the National Health Commission on Nov 3, said the level of internet coverage at grassroots healthcare institutions will be raised by expanding the scale of broadband services and 4G networks in remote and impoverished areas.

The coverage of 5G networks will be expanded to more healthcare institutions to offer better internet connectivity. The blueprint is the central government's latest move to promote telemedicine and bridge the urban-rural healthcare gap.

Last year, China's telemedicine network saw 21.72 million patient visits, and more than 24,000 medical institutions nationwide were connected to the network, according to the NHC.

"The document is a key step toward the establishment of an ideal telemedicine system in China," said Cui Yong, vice-president of the China-Japan Friendship Hospital in Beijing and chairman of an expert panel at the department of dermatology at the National Telemedicine and Connected Health Center.

He noted that the disparity in healthcare between hospitals in first- and second-tier cities and those at the grassroots has seen people flowing to big cities, leaving small hospitals with fewer patients.

Cui added that the gap in the level of medical services between hospitals in different parts of the country could be reduced by telemedicine, which offers remote clinical services and exchanges between practitioners.

One of the major challenges facing the telemedicine system is a lack of application of new technologies, such as 5G and artificial intelligence, with technological levels also varying between hospitals. Those factors are the driving forces behind the document, he said.

He highlighted the need for stronger guidance from the central government and the rolling out of more support policies to integrate telemedicine with the medical insurance system and cutting-edge technologies.

Meanwhile, as hospitals have developed a range of systems for telemedicine, it is important for authorities to push forward the restructuring and unification of such systems to boost connectivity between hospitals and improve efficiency, he said.

"A nationally unified telemedicine system, a key step toward making the system more efficient and diagnoses more accurate, will help raise the level of trust and acceptance among patients," he added.

Cui gave the example of the China-

Japan Friendship Hospital, which undertakes functions for the National Telemedicine and Connected Health Center. It provided long-distance diagnoses for severe COVID-19 cases in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, earlier this year and played a key role in patients' treatment and recovery.

The document also pledged to fully utilize new-generation information technology to improve access to healthcare in poor areas and help impoverished groups.

Diagnostic services

The government will extend telemedicine coverage to all poor counties, connect long-distance diagnostic services to villages equipped to handle them and offer individuals and households access to online lessons about basic healthcare and home management of chronic disease, it added.

Wang Hang, founder and CEO of Haodf, one of China's largest online healthcare companies, said telemedicine has made the services of high-

ranking clinicians much more accessible to rural residents and helped reduce their healthcare costs.

Local authorities have employed Wang's company to provide telemedicine services to residents in the country's western areas, including the Ningxia Hui autonomous region.

He noted that internet access is still lacking in some rural areas and many residents do not own smartphones, while awareness of the help available through telemedicine sys-

tems is low. These are major obstacles to the promotion of telemedicine in remote areas.

"It is important to extend the reach of telemedicine so people in the rural areas can understand that the services are helpful. Only in this way can we gain more people's trust and promote the development of such services at the grassroots level," Wang said.

Zhu Xingxin contributed to this story.

POLICY RESPONSE

Statistics, livestreaming controls are strengthened

By MO JINGXI
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A number of ministry-level departments, including those responsible for television administration, market regulation, commerce and civil affairs, responded recently to matters of public concern.

Regulator targets fake data on TV and radio programs

The television regulator has moved to prevent and penalize the use of fraudulent statistics on radio, TV and online audiovisual programs via a recent regulation, according to a notice published on its website on Thursday.

In the regulation, the National Radio and Television Administration detailed the responsibilities of leading officials and statisticians in guarding against data fraud.

It called on leading groups in local authorities, State-owned enterprises, institutions and organizations to show zero tolerance in the fight against fake statistics and to enforce the relevant penalties.

Efforts should be made to create an atmosphere where statistical personnel and agencies do not dare, are not able, and don't want to commit such malpractice, it said.

The regulation also called for strengthening the systematic approach to ensure the integrity, accuracy and completeness of data.

Supervision of online platforms improved

On Friday, authorities ordered further supervision of the behavior of online platforms, saying that activities such as false discounts and faking online popularity when promoting products via livestreaming will not be allowed.

The demand was one of a series of requirements specified by the State Administration for Market Regulation, the Cyberspace Administration of China and the State Taxation Administration at a meeting in Beijing aimed at regulating the online economy.

Efforts will be made to curb the promotion and sale of fake and poor-quality commodities, accord-

ing to the meeting. Food of unknown origin, sold illegally or with hidden safety problems, will not be made available online.

To protect the rights and interests of consumers, authorities asked online platforms to make their complaint-reporting systems more effective and convenient.

Moreover, consumers' personal information should be protected, as disclosure could result in telecom fraud.

Ten demo zones designed to promote import trade

China will establish 10 demonstration zones to promote imports, authorities announced on Nov 4, the day before the third China

International Import Expo got underway in Shanghai.

The zones, tasked with promoting and facilitating trade innovations, will be set up in Shanghai and the provinces of Liaoning, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong, Sichuan and Shaanxi, Li Xingqian, an official with the Ministry of Commerce, said.

In the coming three to five years, China will foster a number of import demonstration zones that will feature innovative regulatory systems, complete service functions and flexible trade models to steadily expand imports and optimize the structure of imports.

The ministry will continue to implement a series of policies to promote the importation of advanced technologies, equipment and services, as well as products related to improving people's livelihoods, Li said.

Support focus changes for residents after relocation

The focus of support for people who have been resettled in residen-



tial communities from impoverished rural areas has shifted to community building and governance, an official said on Nov 5.

The change is aimed at helping people become accustomed to and fit their new lives and pursue prosperity, Wang Aiwen, vice-minister of civil affairs, told a news conference.

Wang said more than 9.6 million rural residents who lived in poor, inhospitable areas have been relocated to about 35,000 new residential communities amid efforts to eradicate poverty.

He noted that basic public facilities and services have been built in these communities, adding that efforts have been made to maintain distinctive cultural traditions and customs.

Xinhua News Agency contributed to this story.

Policy digest

Guidelines set to boost grotto temple protection

The General Office of the State Council has issued a set of guidelines about protecting and making better use of the country's grotto temples.

Such temples are widely distributed nationwide and are large-scale facilities.

As they integrate different types of art such as architecture, sculpture, wall painting and calligraphy, the temples reflect the nation's aesthetic pursuits, values and cultural spirit, according to a notice published on Nov 4.

However, protection of the temples still faces problems, such as damage caused by geological disasters or intentional harm, a lack of institutions and professional personnel to undertake the protection and management of small and medium-sized temples, and inadequate archaeological research.

The guidelines stress that protection will always be the first priority and emphasize the importance of using science and technology, as well as high-quality, professional personnel in research and restoration, during protection efforts.

They also underscore the need to establish a long-term mechanism to provide security for grotto temples and improve the use of digital technology in their conservation and use.

Protection projects will be carried out to ensure that the major risks faced by grotto temples are fully eliminated by the end of 2022.

The guidelines note that efforts should also be made to better display the beauty of grotto temples and regulate tourism activities, and said the development of tourism should emphasize protection and avoid excessive commercialization.

They also stress the importance of strengthening cooperation in the protection of cultural heritage with countries along the ancient Silk Road and the promotion of relations to be established between grotto temples at home and abroad.

To cultivate talented people in the fields of archaeology, heritage protection and digital technology for grotto temple protection, a joint education base focusing on postgraduate studies will be established by the end of 2022, according to the guidelines.

New energy vehicles to embrace breakthroughs



China has pledged to boost high-quality development of new energy vehicles, according to a plan for the growth of the sector from 2021 to 2035, published on Nov 2.

The plan, issued by the General Office of the State Council, said development of such vehicles is a strategic move to tackle climate change and promote green development.

To boost development of new energy vehicles in China, the plan emphasizes the need for efforts to make breakthroughs in core key technologies, improve the sector's basic capabilities, improve infrastructure systems and optimize the environment for industrial development.

By 2025, the country's new energy vehicle sector should have made groundbreaking achievements in key technologies such as batteries, motors and vehicle operating systems to significantly improve market competitiveness, according to the plan.

By that time, new sales of such vehicles should equal 20 percent of the country's total car sales, it added.

The plan also called for greater international cooperation and active participation in international competition, resulting in China's new vehicle industry becoming deeply integrated with global industrial and value chains.