

## **Interview**

### **Sameer S. Sawarkar, Chief Executive Officer, Neurosynaptic**

*What is it about your company/project that makes it so special?*

Rural healthcare scenario is a complex interplay of various parameters that include affordability of healthcare, role of public and private providers, reach of quality medicine, non-availability of healthcare personnel, infrastructure, social security/insurance and viable, sustainable and scalable business models. Neurosynaptic focuses on developing technologies for remote diagnostics and healthcare delivery. We started with a question – can telemedicine and remote diagnostics bridge the healthcare divide for rural areas affordably. This was the beginning of a journey, and today we can proudly claim that it does. The ReMeDi™ (**Remote Medical Diagnostics**) range of products and comprehensive telemedicine solution developed by Neurosynaptic in collaboration with the TeNeT group of the IIT Madras, allows transmission of various vital parameters about the patient to a doctor for preliminary diagnosis, either in real-time or in a store-and-forward mode. To address the lack of availability of trained medical professionals in the villages, the solution has been developed such that after a minimal amount of training, even a high-school graduate can operate the solution. The solution provides complete Electronic Medical Records, images, various health parameters like ECG and heart sounds, as well as audio-video conferencing at very low bandwidth, thereby making it an excellent platform for rural and remote healthcare delivery in villages starved for infrastructure and medical expertise. In addition, Neurosynaptic has developed rural healthcare delivery technology<sup>1</sup> through telemedicine and already provides telemedicine services in a few rural areas by forging partnerships with various entities required for delivery of healthcare (e.g. hospital, pharmaceutical and insurance) in a self-sustainable and scalable way.

1.

*What country best facilitates starting a tech company?*

This is a difficult question to answer. Let's say there are a few important things that are conducive to starting a tech company – Firstly, availability of talent and competitiveness; Secondly, creativity and an environment that actively encourages new ideas and solution (and academia has a big role to play here); Thirdly, the mechanisms of financing technology ideas. There are of course more factors like the respect for intellectual property, availability of infrastructure etc. Then the team's ability to convert technology into revenue is vital, and hence appropriate expertise and availability of talent around are the major factors. Rewards for innovation is a primary motivational factor.

Traditionally, Silicon Valley has pioneered the starting of tech companies. However, in recent times, in India we see a big boost in technology investments and companies, and the environment is definitely getting friendlier for entrepreneurship. Government is playing an active role by encouraging technology companies. Excellent academia and availability of world class talent makes it a very potent location for starting technology companies.

*What makes an innovator?*

An innovator sees a gap or pain in the existing system, refuses to accept the way things are with that gap, creates newer solutions for bridging that gap, and works passionately for making those solutions a reality.

*How does your company contribute to improving the state of the world?*

In a world, where millions of people are pushed below the poverty line every year due to the healthcare expenditure alone, we bring forth a possibility of making available equity of quality healthcare at remote locations with appropriate technology<sup>Error! Bookmark not defined.</sup>.

*ReMeDi™* is an affordable and completely integrated solution that works at very low bandwidth. The solution requires an inexpensive set-up at the patient and the doctor end, making it very attractive (All that is required is a normal configuration PC with accessories and an Internet connection).

Together with the healthcare delivery technology, it is a unique solution that very effectively addresses the rural/remote healthcare need. Through these deployments, about 75% of the patients get treated in their respective villages, thereby significantly reducing the need to travel to towns for healthcare. A very significant impact has also been that patients approached for healthcare much earlier in the disease lifecycle.

With the *ReMeDi™* technology, quality healthcare can be delivered to the rural and remote areas affordably. Rural population will be able to obtain best in class healthcare services within their village. This avoids unnecessary travel and delays. Since this technology requires only a trained high-school graduate at the village end, it essentially overcomes the basic limitation of unavailability of healthcare personnel in the villages. This has a potential to bring about a transformation in the healthcare economics of village where people are pushed below poverty line due to loans/borrowings to take care of their healthcare expenditure. In other segments, quality healthcare will be available to the patients very affordably, when it is needed most – in ambulance care, home care and critical care. It can potentially save many lives.

This healthcare delivery system can also revolutionize health education, maintenance of health records, and awareness creation. It will enhance the ability of the public healthcare system to respond to the crises like outbreak of epidemics much faster.