Daily Mains Practice Question 07-07-2026

GS II - Health

"Digital health is becoming the next generation of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in India." In this context, critically examine how the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) can improve healthcare governance while ensuring privacy and data security. **(15 Marks, 250 Words)**

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Answer

Introduction:

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) refers to interoperable digital platforms that enable secure and inclusive delivery of public services. The ABDM is aimed at establishing an integrated digital health ecosystem that enables seamless exchange of health information while ensuring privacy, consent, and interoperability, thereby advancing India's goal of Universal Health Coverage (SDG-3).

Main Body

How has the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) improved healthcare governance?

- **Digital Health Records** – It enables healthcare providers to generate digital health records, which provide access to previous medical records, ensure continuity of care and improve clinical decision-making.
- **Evidence-based Governance** – It generates anonymised health datasets that support disease surveillance, resource allocation, and data-driven public health policymaking.
- **Improved Efficient Healthcare Delivery** – Through digital prescriptions, telemedicine, teleconsultations, and e-records enhance accessibility, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- **Efficiency & Transparency** – It helped to reduce paperwork, fraud, claim duplication, and administrative delays in schemes such as Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY.
- **Innovation through Open DPI** – Open infrastructure encourages AI-enabled healthcare, supported by initiatives like SAHI (Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in

Healthcare for India) & BODH (Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health AI), while preserving privacy through anonymised datasets.
- **Faster Insurance Processing** – The National Health Claims Exchange (NHCE) acts as a digital platform connecting insurers, hospitals, beneficiaries, and regulators.
- **Accessible Healthcare Services** – Unified Health Interface (UHI) enables seamless interaction between patients and providers, similar to UPI in digital payments.

What are the challenges to privacy and data security?

- **Data Privacy & Cybersecurity** – The large-scale health records are targeted by cybercriminals.
- **Informed Patient Consents** – Lack of digital literacy among patients weakens informed and meaningful consent.
- **Misuse of Sensitive Health Data** – Risks of profiling, discrimination, or unauthorised commercial use and uneven digital infrastructure hinder secure implementation.
- **Interoperability Risks** – Data sharing across multiple stakeholders increases cybersecurity vulnerabilities.
- **Digital Divide** – Unequal digital access may exclude vulnerable populations from digital healthcare benefits.

What measures need to be taken?

- **Privacy & Data Protection** – Privacy-by-Design architecture with no central government repository stores all patient data with minimal data collection.
- **Consent-Based Data Sharing** – Data sharing occurs only through patient consent via the Health Information Exchange Consent Manager (HIE-CM), with records remaining at the original healthcare provider.
- **Strong Compliance** – Strict enforcement of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, mandatory security audits for third-party health applications and a robust grievance redressal mechanism.
- **Enhance Digital Health Literacy** – Address the digital divide by deploying frontline community health workers (Asha and Anganwadi workers), simplify consent using regional languages, and improve digital infrastructure.
- **Boost Private Participation** – Increase private-sector participation through the Microsite Project and wider adoption of ABDM-compliant Hospital Management Information Systems (HMIS).

Conclusion:

The ABDM represents a transformative shift in India's healthcare landscape by establishing a secure, interoperable, and citizen-centric digital health ecosystem. As India expands this digital public infrastructure while safeguarding privacy and inclusivity, ABDM has the potential to become a global model for digital health governance and significantly advance the country's journey towards Universal Health Coverage.



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