# Background and Overview

Access to cabs has been disrupted by Uber and Ola. Commerce has been disrupted by marketplaces like Flipkart and Amazon. Lingerie has been disrupted by Zivame. How simple would it be if one could consult doctors online at the push of a button? But, can it be reliable? Can a previously unknown doctor really be able to solve health issues online and that too without seeing you?

Doctor-patient ratio in India is 1: 1,700 compared with 1: 1,000 suggested by World Health Organization (WHO). Britain has just 2.71 doctors per 1,000 people... which is fewer than Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. In the U.S the ratio is 2.3 per 1000. India alone presents a $250 million opportunity for Online-healthcare services within the next three years while globally it is a $30 billion opportunity

In most cases, specifically with regard to chronic medical conditions, multiple visits to doctors are not a necessity. The idea is not to substitute the hospital visit, but to supplement it. In the U.S, patients need to spend $300-400 for a follow-up visit to the doctor.

Online Medical Services is a virtual platform that brings doctor and patient together online in real time. Individuals can seek their advice online or consult with them over the phone and HD video if they have an urgent health concern that requires immediate consultation.

It allows users to communicate with doctors through text, voice and video from anywhere, anytime. People can get their health queries answered for free but, for a consultation from a doctor of their choice, they have to pay the consultation fee—determined by the specific doctor. Users can also book an appointment with the doctor of their choice, if they wish to visit the clinic.

Irrespective of where one resides, online medical consultations democratizes affordable healthcare options to large segments of the populations, which would otherwise have been unaffordable.

# Basic Business Model

The main business model behind Online Doctor consultation portal has been explained below:

## Real time virtual consultations

* Users can make online appointments with doctors for a virtual consultation
* If the user is not sure which Doctor to set the appointment with, they may post questions about their needs. They will then be assigned to a practitioner by the Admin
* Once the Doctor is assigned to a patient, they can choose to have a virtual consultation why chat, audio or video
* Doctors may post their consultation charges on the website
* Clients can pay the fees online via payment processors

## Offline forum based consultations

* Users can post health related questions.
* Questions get assigned to doctors based on category of the question.
* High priority answers can be requested at a small fee
* All asked questions form a database which can be accessed by anyone.
* Follow up appointments with preferred doctors
* Setup generic appointments when the issue is not well known

This unique business model offers plenty of scope for monetization.

# Revenue Generation Model

Growth of popular websites is driven by a solid revenue generation system. There are 2 types of revenue streams.

Google Adsense:

This method is works brilliantly because every question asked by a user gets added in the database and is assigned a new page. More the number of pages, more the visibility of ads and more the revenue generated.

## Paid services

### One-time Fee based consultation

Patients may consult with a doctor of their choosing by paying a one-time online fee. These fees may be tiered based on the quality of the interaction. For example chat vs. audio vs. video interactions

### Paid Questions:

This is another way to monetize doctor patient interaction. You can choose to charge small fee for quick answers or well-detailed answers.

The above two make smart revenue generation method which can easily be implemented. Keep the pricing low to get maximum paid answer queries.

# Other site features

## Homepage

The homepage will work best with simplicity. Reserve the top fold for sign-up and sign-in option along with a bar to ask question. Share impressive site numbers once you have built a user base. If you have partnered with experienced doctors, don’t hesitate to show their photo. Let’s dig deeper into homepage features:

## Sign-Up/Sign-In

Keep sign-in and sign-up separate. Make sure the forms are easy to fill and small in nature, Use field validation to help visitors fill the forms quickly.

## Sign Up as a Doctor

* Provision of admin approval for doctor accounts
* Education and experience verification process after initial sign up

## ‘Ask Questions’ / ‘Make Appointments’ functionality

The core functionality of the website is about asking questions and setting up appointments with doctors. So, you need to place the feature of posting question in the first fold of the website itself. Prominent features here are

* Make the question posting bar prominent
* Question category based on the medical field
* Option to add more details
* Recently Answered Questions

Give a clear idea of the type of questions posted and the answers given by doctors with recently answered and featured questions section on homepage. The option to up-vote answers and request edits can also be added to enhance answers.

## Footer Section

The footer section can contain links to different pages which include About Us, Blog, Contact, Legal Information and Careers. Also this space can be used for social media buttons and medical affiliations if any.

# Website Features and Functionality

The success of doctor consultation platforms lies in their ease of use. Certain impressive features have been listed below for your reference:

## Types of Users:

Before moving ahead to critical site features, let‟s see the type of users who will access the website and what features can be provided to each type.

### Guest visitors

* Can browse all questions and read through the answers.
* Can see the number of doctors online at a given time.
* Can access ‘ask a question’ page but cannot post a question.

### Registered Users (Patients)

* Can browse all questions on the website and read through the answers.
* Can see the number of patients and doctors online at a given time.
* Can post unlimited questions.
* Can pay the consultation to get an answer on priority basis.
* Can follow health topics for new questions posted in that topic.
* Have access to “My questions” within the account.

Features for registered members have been explained in the upcoming section.

### Registered Users (Doctors)

* Doctor accounts approval by the admin.
* Doctors can answer the questions.
* Number of questions answered is available for internal use.

### Admin

* Manages questions and answers.
* Manages registered members (Patients).
* Manages registered doctors.
* Can assign questions to doctors.
* Manages payments for priority questions.

Additional admin features can be added if you choose a customizable clone script to launch your doctor consultation platform.

## Ask a Question Feature

Answering questions posted by users is the main feature of the website. So, create a special page containing a form where users can post their questions. Main fields of “ask a doctor online” form have been listed below.

* Form Fields:
* Question.
* Symptoms.
* Category.
* Title.
* Medical history
* Contact details
* Functionality of ‘Ask Question’ feature:
* Posted questions get assigned to different doctors based on category.
* A special page for each question.
* Answer is sent to the user, and is also listed below the question on website.

An option to pay the fee to get answer on priority basis

Rich accounts section

Browse Question Answers (Database Section)

Develop a vast database of question and answers to generate more ad income through clicks and enrich your platform. Make provision to add every question being asked by a user in the category chosen at the time of posting the question.

Some unique features of popular Q&A directories are:

Intuitive arrangement of topics.

Further categorization of questions in a particular topic based on Most Popular, Most Shared, etc.

Linking of blog posts with questions

Real time data sharing

Users love to engage with websites with an active audience. Show that that you are a lively community by sharing doctors and patients online. The mention of such numbers makes the site more credible and acts as a motivational factor for a user to ask question.

Informative Blog

Share health related information and informative guides on your blog. This will be difficult without a blog powered by easy to manage CMS. Blogging is important to increase your reach among targeted audience. We suggest the same for your own doctor query sharing clone

Powerful search

The Question and Answer directory is a unique way to present the previously asked questions on the website. To make the user experience richer, a search feature for this section can be a great addition. Auto-complete functionality can further enhance platform search and appeal.

UX focused design and navigation

Creating doctor consultation and search platform will be rewarding only if your site is easy to navigate and browse. So, even if you are planning to build your site on a clone script, don’t hesitate to invest in design upgrade. This will greatly add to your question-answer site’s appeal.

Help Section

Not everyone is master of using search driven websites. Hence, there is need to make provision of comprehensive Help section. Frequently Asked Questions can be an interesting addition. It will help users understand how the site works and answers all vast range of queries. Chat support can also go a long way in establishing you as online doctor search and consultation leader.

The Bottom Line for Q&A sites

Doctor consultation platforms are based on a unique business model where the site pays doctors to answer questions posted by patients and in turn earns money from advertisements to compensate doctors. According to a survey, 44 million people in the USA do not have health insurance. This means there is a big set of people who would love to consult professional doctors for less.

If you are planning to launch a similar site, then this is the right time to do so. Health topics are one of the most widely searched topics on the internet and there are not many sites providing such services. A site with excellent interface and flawless features can reach out to millions of users very quickly. But make sure you have all the advance features.

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