



ROBERT SIGAL

CEO of the American Hospital of Paris

Brian A. GALLAGHER

It is good. The roads and the accidents on the roads just remind me that the two common threads are this transition that countries in Africa are between emerging economies and developed and that they have not always planned for the pass over. The roads issue is a perfect one. Robert Sigal, the question is why would we invite the CEO of the American Hospital in Paris to a conversation on health care in Africa? Robert is a business leader. He ran the GE health business in France before taking on the CEO role and he has a very interesting perspective on health care generally, but also health care in Africa. If you would please.

Robert SIGAL

Yes, thank you, Brian. First of all, I would like to thank the organizer and certainly Thierry de Montbrial for organizing this session. Who can imagine that we will aim at a better world without having better health? It is impossible, so health care is certainly a founding block of better health care. In providing health care, if you want to deliver health care, whether in France, in the United States or in Africa, you need basically three things: basic infrastructure, water, electricity. Then you need health care infrastructure, buildings, equipment, and finally you need human infrastructure, nurses, technicians and of course physicians.

When you look at Africa today, 47 countries, the situation is of course very diverse. If you look at Maghreb, for instance, there is infrastructure. There is basic infrastructure and certainly there is health care infrastructure. If you look at data regarding physicians, for instance, and you look at how many physicians you have per 10,000 people in Maghreb, in Algeria, you have 18 doctors, in Morocco seven. If you look at South Africa, you are at nine. However, now if you look in between the situation is not the same. It would be below five and it can go as low as 0.5 physicians per 10,000 people in Nigeria, so there is clearly a quantitative problem.

Progress, however, is there, and yesterday we heard Prime Minister Coulibaly who mentioned that the middle class is going to be 800 million people in 10 years, and this middle class is looking for health care and in general again who can imagine that in all these countries solid growth and social justice will occur without solid health care?

In this mood of making progress I would like to point to two specific domains. The need for quality is number one and the need for accountability is number two. The need for quality: let me go back to the problem of physicians. Even if you say that in a country you have eight, ten doctors per 10,000, by the way for France we are at 30 for 10,000 and in the United States it is 26, so you need to have the good doctors. You need to have specialists. There are certain countries in Western Africa where you have less than 10 gastroenterologists for the whole country, so you need to train all those specialists.

The second point I would like to stress regarding quality is hospital and health care managers. It is not an issue only for Africa. Believe me, it is an issue wherever you are in the world, in France, as in any other country. You need good hospital managers, and this points to my second point which is accountability.

There is no shortage of financing and financiers around the world. It can be public. It can be the WHO. It can be the Gates Foundation, and it can be private sector of course. There is money. However, all these people are asking the same question: 'If I invest EUR 1 or USD 1, what is the return on investment? What is accountable for this money is the return on investment or a value for money, call it whatever you want'.

I think that for these two challenges, quality and accountability, technology is an answer. Not the only answer, but it is a very important answer. Let me be a little bit more specific. Number one, technology is completely linked to modern medicine. In any hospital, in any clinic you need modern imaging, MR, CT, operating rooms, laboratory equipment and so on.



I would like then to point to information technology. Information technology is transforming our world, maybe at the cost of the carbon, as was said before, but it is transforming the world and it can be used in several ways. One of them is simply organizing digital education. I spoke about the need to enforce and enhance the education of physicians. We are organizing in our hospital every year what we call the gastro training where we train the gastroenterologists of Africa inside and at the same time we have a digital link with several countries in Africa where people can watch and participate with these, and there are a myriad of initiatives for this digital education.

Another point with digital is continuum of care and this is very important. Today what I see and what we are discussing in my hospital we get a lot of patients coming from Africa, but in many cases, sorry, it is too late, as simple as that. We cannot provide good service for these people. Having tele-radiology, tele-medical conferences, is a tool that enables us to triage the good patients and to avoid getting patients for which you cannot do anything. Once you have treated the patient you have to follow up on this patient because you can imagine that you need to follow with local doctors and the local infrastructure, so this is digital information.

However, you can even think forward, leapfrog. Let me just say something concrete about artificial intelligence. We are using today in our hospital artificial intelligence with mammograms to detect women who are at risk for breast cancer. It is used with genetics and it is used with mammography. Today in the western world, artificial intelligence is a help for the radiologist, but you can imagine that tomorrow in Africa you have a mobile mammography unit. You meet with a mammo technologist, no need for a radiologist and the mammogram is sent to the cloud artificial intelligence program and it is able to detect women which are at risk for developing cancer. This is becoming real now. It is not just a dream.

Finally, the last point about technology is accountability, it is data. If you are digital you have more and more data, you are accumulating data and we know today that in the real world, in the western world, accountability now is simply data. It is the fact that you are not just speaking and explaining nice things. You analyze to controllership data. If we put and develop those digital infrastructures in place, the accountability and the capacity and the will of the payers to sustain the effort will increase.

I will just finish with this point: in my previous life, industrial life, it was an American company and the company understood at some point that what was good in America was not good for other continents. There were a lot of efforts which were done in China for China, in India for India. We can imagine exactly the same for Africa: in Africa for Africa. Yesterday we had President Kagame, where everybody knows the IT success of Rwanda. You can perfectly imagine that some solution, local solution invented in Africa, and because we are close to the market, to the needs, we are cost effective and they are good for Africa, but tomorrow, and this is what happened in China for China and in India for India, those products which, at the beginning, were only good for those markets became good for the entire world. Maybe step one is in Africa for Africa, but step two is why not everywhere in the future, so I am optimistic for Africa.

Brian A. GALLAGHER

Thank you, Robert.