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100-odd hospitals plan to launch DigiLocker for cancer patients

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Cancer patients shuttling between hospitals, travelling long distances with their medical documents and undergoing repeated tests at a new centre may get some relief, with at least 108 cancer hospitals across India planning to launch DigiLocker to store medical information of registered patients. DigiLocker or digital locker is a Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) initiative under the Centre that provides an online space of 1GB, links it with Aadhaar card details and allows one to store documents. A person c an store driving licence, university marksheets and PAN information in the locker and link it with his or her Aadhaar card to reduce the hassle of carrying documents for verification.While the issue of linking Aadhaar information to several government schemes is facing heat on grounds of personal security, the Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH) plans to utilise the online digital space for only willing patients who register.It is not going to be a compulsory service. A patient can register himself to save medical files on DigiLocker. If he wants to continue treatment in another hospital, all he needs to do is hand over the DigiLocker access (to the hospital concerned), said Dr C S Pramesh, in-charge of the National Cancer Grid (NCG).Under the NCG, spearheaded by the TMH, the countrys specialised cancer hospitals conduct video conferences to brainstorm on difficult cases. Currently, 108 hospitals are part of the NCG and together, they treat around 60 per cent of cancer cases in India.The idea of using a DigiLocker for patients was floated in a recent meeting with Dr Pramod Verma, a UIDAI architect.Asked how patients who are not literate can use the facility, Pramesh said the number key of a DigiLocker would be given to the patient. Only the patient can share that code with another hospital to access the details of all his test reports, information on chemotherapy and radiation cycle and planned treatment.The move may, however, put patients without an Aadhaar card at a disadvantage.The Tata hospital receives over 70,000 cancer patients a year . A lot of patients move back to their native towns when they run out of the means to support prolonged treatment.Even if they lose a report, the digital information will remain secure, Pramesh, also the head of thoracic surgery, said.