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Consult docs from other cities with phone cards

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Dec. 20: Sample this.

"Hello, doctor-saar? I think I have heart trouble. Or is it gas? Can you help me?"

"Sure, have you recharged your 'Oxigen' card? This might take some time," replies the doctor, on the other side of the phone line.

A doctor's consultation over a call from your mobile phone is the latest technological short-cut on offer, as the world's first 'pre-paid calling card' was introduced to the city, by Delhi-based 'Oxigen Private Ltd' on Saturday. "On registering with Oxigen, a virtual 'oxicash wallet' is created.

“This service is best suited for post surgery or post-hospitalisation follow-ups.”

The 'wallet' needs to be recharged, and then, patients can call any doctor registered with Oxigen for a paid consultation," explains Sunil Kulkarni, group president.

Patients with enough 'balance' on their oxicash cards will first choose a doctor, using a code number that ensures that both their mobile numbers stay confidential. When the doctor accepts the call, the consul-

tation begins, and the caller (patient) is charged by the minute, according to rates fixed between the doctor and 'Oxigen'.

"This service is best suited for post surgery or post-hospitalisation follow-ups. Those who want to consult doctors in different cities will also benefit," Kulkarni added. Patients with psychiatric problems, or those who are embarrassed to be seen outside a venerologist's clinic are also potential clients. While the company is still signing up doctors for its unique service, it remains to be seen if such 'indirect' consultations will score over a conventional, face to face interaction with the practitioner.