

# Patient Education via Digital Screens

New health care rules mean doctors are likely to find themselves with less and less time to spend with patients, opening an opportunity for digital technology to fill the gap.

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By Richard Slawsky  
DigitalSignageToday.com

Digital screens are increasingly becoming a fixture of health care facilities. Digital signage on medical campuses guide visitors to their next appointment, while flat-panel screens in waiting rooms help shorten perceived wait time by keeping patients entertained.

In addition, kiosks and tablets help cut costs and eliminate paperwork by allowing patients to fill out forms and make payments on their accounts electronically.

But with millions of previously unserved consumers gaining access to health care via the Affordable Care Act, medical professionals are likely to find they have less and less time to spend with patients explaining procedures.

And that's where digital networks can serve an additional purpose. The digital screens in those facilities can be leveraged to assist with the task of educating patients, informing them about the details of procedures they may be considering and exposing them to health care information they might not otherwise have encountered.



## A flood of new patients

Government statistics pegged the number of Americans lacking health insurance at the end of 2013 at about 48 million. With mandatory insurance rules beginning to kick in this year, many of those people will be seeking health care for the first time.

At the same time, the Association of American Medical Colleges estimates the United States is currently short 20,000 doctors. With nearly half of those doctors currently in the medical field over the age of 50, that number is expected to get worse. The American Medical Association is predicting a shortage of nurses as well.

Obviously, those numbers indicate the health care system will be increasingly strained in the next few years, with professionals unlikely to have the time to educate patients about complex procedures.



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“Far from being a crisis, though, we see this as a tremendous opportunity for leveraging technology that’s already a feature in health care facilities,” said Brian Nutt, CEO of Louisville, Ky.-based Codigo, a provider of media solutions for clients including hotels, restaurants, college campuses and health care facilities.

Codigo’s software can play uploaded videos, commercials, training videos or converted DVD files across channels including digital signage, tablets and interactive kiosks.

“Before-and after videos regarding a specific procedure might be a good fit for digital signage in a waiting room, while those desiring privacy might view details about that procedure on a tablet or kiosk,” Nutt said. “In addition, a doctor or nurse might use a tablet or digital screen in an examination room as a supplemental tool to help educate patients and alleviate their concerns. The facility could also place those videos on a website for the patient to view at home.”

### Alleviating concerns

In their most basic application digital screens can serve double duty as brand ambassadors, promoting a practice’s services while at the same time showing patients the outcomes of specific procedures.

Dr. Rashid M Rashid, who operates the Mosaic Clinic: Hair Transplant Center in Houston, uses a digital screen to demonstrate the results his facility can help achieve. And Dr. Luana O’Connor, who operates two dental practices in Romania that serve more than 250 patients a week, says using tablets to show patients before-and-after pictures for dental implant surgery has been a complete boon for her practice.

“Nowadays patients want live and in color when seeing before-and-after shows, and static pics will not cut it today,” Dr. O’Connor said. “Testimonials on video are another essential tool.”

More complex applications include an interactive kiosk displaying content on atrial fibrillation that debuted at The Heart Institute at Staten Island in August 2013. Atrial fibrillation, or A-fib, is often referred to as the most common form of heart arrhythmia and affects more than 2 million Americans.

A-fib is caused by delayed electrical signals that cause the heart to contract at an abnormal rate. In most cases, patients are treated with pharmaceutical options, which include blood thinners, rate control drugs and anti-arrhythmic drugs. Many of these medications, however, require daily intake and have strong side effects that include abnormal profuse internal bleeding.



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### About the sponsor:

*Louisville, Ky.-based Codigo works to bring innovative media solutions to market so its clients can make a positive impact on the retail behavior of consumers in their stores. Although the company is focused on the financial industry, specifically community banks and credit unions, Codigo has also been involved in projects for major hotel chains, nationwide quick-service restaurants, college campuses, financial institutions, and healthcare facilities. The company’s goal is to move forward with new, easy-to-use products and services that empower its customers to inform, entertain, and market to their audience.*

Joseph T. McGinn, medical director and cardiac surgeon at The Heart Institute, and Soad Bekheit, director of electrophysiology, unveiled the kiosk, which features videos about the Cryoballoon Ablation treatment for the condition.

In Cryoballoon Ablation, freezing air that reaches  $-70^{\circ}\text{C}$  is released in the pulmonary vein to target the abnormal electrical signals that produce heart-beat irregularities. A balloon-like tool used in this procedure allows the vein to be closed off from any new erratic signals, while also releasing the large amount of freezing air that ablates current irregular signals to the heart. The kiosk allows the patient to watch video of this procedure to get familiar with the process before it is performed.

### Improved satisfaction, improved recovery

Not only are digital screens beneficial in educating patients, they seem to help improve overall patient satisfaction as well.

Three out of four patients and caregivers who viewed hospital messaging on digital signage screens in eight hospitals in the United States found the content enhanced the hospital experience and provided health information they could use, according to a study by media and marketing research firm Arbitron Inc.

The research firm conducted on-site interviews with adults who had viewed hospital and health-related information running on flatscreen monitors placed in hospital waiting areas and cafeterias. The study was commissioned by MedCenterDisplay, a provider of digital patient engagement networks.

Survey respondents said the video screens were informative and educational, better than print as a means of distributing information, and that they learned something new from the screens, ranking this information from 4.0 to 4.5 on a 1 to 5 scale, with 5 being the highest ranking.

The report also found that only one-third of all visitors to the hospital were actually patients. Two-thirds were family members and caregivers of patients, which correlates with national estimates on the rising number of adult caregivers reaching nearly 45 million, according to AARP.

“We believe these findings clearly reinforce the value in establishing a robust patient engagement network that brings patients and hospitals together to improve health care,” MedCenterDisplay CEO Gregg Tarquinio said. “Already hospitals that communicate key health care delivery messages on digital screens are seeing lower readmissions and higher (patient) satisfaction scores.”