

Patient experience, powered by cable

Amenities like HD video and in-room Wi-Fi are vital to satisfaction in a competitive healthcare environment.

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By Stewart Schley

Across the nation, hospital rooms, waiting areas and doctor's offices are getting a major makeover. And the business services divisions of local cable companies are a big part of the toolkit.

Aiming to elevate patient experience and satisfaction, hospitals and providers are putting major investments into patient-centered facility design and upgrades. A February 2015 study by researchers from Johns Hopkins Medicine noted an estimated \$200 billion will be spent in the current decade on U.S. hospital construction and renovation. Motivations include Medicare's move to tie hospital reimbursement to patient satisfaction scores, rising competition for payers among for-profit hospitals, an aging U.S. population, and a discerning base of patients who increasingly have choices in where to seek care.

Among the results: comfortable rooms, natural lighting, outdoor gardens, restaurant-quality food choices, and a realization that patients and families want access to the same sorts of entertainment and communications features they're accustomed to at home – in lobbies, patient rooms and recovery rooms. "Hotel-like amenities" including on-demand entertainment are now expected in the new competitive healthcare economy, noted the Johns Hopkins researchers.



As a result, hospitals and healthcare providers increasingly are turning to cable companies for one-stop delivery of Internet connectivity, robust Wi-Fi networks and home-style television services.

It's easy to understand why. These services are among the staple offerings of today's cable companies, flowing from the same fiber optic and coaxial networks that underlie the large majority of U.S. residential Internet and video connections. Cable companies are uniquely suited to manage bundled suites of telecommunications and entertainment services for healthcare providers on a large scale because...that's what they do.

Now, cable companies are blending longstanding expertise in video and Internet delivery with dedicated healthcare service and product development groups that specialize in the segment. Among examples:

- Time Warner Cable Business Class.** In 2014, the company introduced a specialized television receiving platform built specifically for hospital and healthcare applications. The HD Video for Healthcare platform operates from a customized variation of a traditional cable video receiver, capable of providing a homelike viewing experience for patients through advanced video technology that includes an interactive program guide, 100-plus HD channels, on-demand programs and the ability to pause, fast forward and rewind through selections. The HD video platform stands out from competitive alternatives because it draws on a cable industry strength: existing investments in scaled video delivery. That means hospitals can help elevate patient satisfaction without having to install or maintain their own equipment, and they can also add capacity easily as conditions demand. The HD Video for Healthcare suite gives patients a television experience similar to what they have at home.
- Multiple cable companies.** Broadband Internet service, and robust Wi-Fi networks in particular, are additional components of the cable-powered patient amenity experience that are rising in importance and are deployed and supported by all major U.S. cable companies. In waiting rooms, especially, reliable, high-speed Wi-Fi access is seen as a vital "must-have" amenity – one that can have strong influence on patient and family satisfaction. A 2012 Pricewaterhousecoopers survey found television and Wi-Fi services ranked among four most valued attributes of provider offerings for healthcare consumers. Cable companies already are major players on the business Wi-Fi scene: Comcast alone maintains more than 8 million Wi-Fi hotspots nationwide. But beyond



sheer scale, cable providers have deep experience in working with healthcare clients on nuances of patient Wi-Fi networks – such as the critical need to maintain separate internal and patient-facing networks, and the ability to provision accurately for the number of users and devices physicians and caretakers can expect to serve.

Going forward, the range of patient amenities supported by cable companies will extend beyond video entertainment and wireless Internet connectivity. In-room video conferencing is one emerging focus. Imagine a patient greeting a family member or caretaker live via interactive video. As these bandwidth-intensive contributors to patient satisfaction grow, so will the cable industry's role in helping providers meeting rising expectations.

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