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Tablets in Healthcare: Improving the Patient Experience and Operational Efficiency

WITH NEW OPTIONS FOR DATA ACCESS AND ACCURACY AMONG PRACTITIONERS, TABLETS DELIVER THE POTENTIAL FOR BETTER PATIENT CARE AT LOWER COST.

Few industries are facing as much change—especially from the standpoint of technology—as healthcare. The way healthcare looks now versus the way it will look in just a few years will be substantially different. In fact, it's already changing.

According to a December 2012 report, HIMSS Analytics forecast that the percentage of medical practitioners using mobile apps in patient care would grow significantly in 2013, in multiple areas.[1]

- Bedside data collection: from 30 percent in 2012 to 45 percent in 2013
- Barcode reader usage: from 23 percent in 2012 to 38 percent in 2013
- Data monitoring from medical devices: from 27 percent in 2012 to 34 percent in 2013
- Visual representations of patient data: from 13 percent in 2012 to 27 percent in 2013

It's no exaggeration to say that healthcare organizations are looking to technology to transform the patient experience. They want to shift from reactionary care (dealing with issues as they arise) to maintenance-based care (addressing patients' health proactively). But under no circumstances do practitioners want technology to intrude in the physical space between them and their patients. Technology that's too bulky creates a physical barrier at a time when it's vital for patients to feel comfortable.

Patients, too, want to have more control over their healthcare experience. Increasingly, they're using technology to make appointments, renew prescriptions and access healthcare records. Having that accessibility to data gives them a higher level of comfort.

At the same time, though, healthcare organizations are investigating the potential of technology to increase their operational efficiency while reducing costs. For instance, ensuring that practitioners collect accurate, shared information at every phase of the patient experience—from check-in to visit or hospital stay to check-out—reduces the chance for errors, both medical and clerical.

While the drive for efficiency is frequently indicative of a desire to save money, increasing government regulation in the form of healthcare reform requires greater investment in technology. For instance, newly mandated meaningful use regulations force accountable care organizations (ACOs) to deliver audited reports to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Systems (CMS) in order to increase reimbursement.

/// HOW TABLETS BENEFIT HEALTHCARE

Whatever the motivation for using technology, it's crucial for healthcare organizations to focus on the patient: All information flows from interaction with patients. That's why one of the fundamental factors in improving both patient care and operational efficiency is mobile technology—and the replacement of bulky, stationary devices with tablets.

Tablets offer a variety of screen sizes and form factors, which make them viable for any clinical task. Some are even compact enough that clinicians can slip them into their lab coats; with minimal size and weight, they not only eliminate any physical barrier between patient and practitioner, but with pen-based input they can replicate the familiar and comfortable model of the clipboard. Even more important, they bring digital technology into exam rooms, labs and other areas that may not have been originally designed to accommodate technology.

With practitioners using tablets, patient information is updated quickly from multiple locations (it's also more accurate, because it eliminates any confusion that might come from handwritten orders). In the reverse scenario, it means that practitioners also have immediate access to recently updated lab and other test results. With this higher level of collaboration, decisions regarding patient care can be made more quickly and effectively.

Issuing tablets to patients also has practical uses. One hospital loans out tablets to parents whose infants are in neonatal care so they can use video capture technology to view the cribs whenever they want.

/// THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEROPERABILITY

One key underlying principle ties all these scenarios together: Tablets aren't stand-alone devices. To be most effective, they must be interoperable not only with back-end systems, but also with the plethora of digital devices found throughout hospitals. That means tablets must excel both as input devices and as output devices.

Clinicians must be able to collect input information from patients, as well as from other medical devices, and then output it when necessary. They need to print out post-visit and stay instructions for patients quickly and easily. This means:

▶ Clinicians must be able to upload that information quickly and accurately to back-end electronic health record (EHR) systems.
▶ With aggregated patient information collected in databases, healthcare systems can apply improved analytics in order to better understand trends.

▶ Tablets must be able to wirelessly communicate with traditional peripherals, such as wireless printers.

These capabilities address the twin needs of healthcare technology: The result is not only better patient care, but also increased operational efficiency.

/// HOW SAMSUNG HELPS

Samsung understands the challenges the healthcare industry faces, and it has made extensive strides to address them. Starting with hardware, Samsung offers a variety of size options, from 7-inch to 10-inch screens, depending on the work situation in which they're used. And because their portability dictates that they be used in a variety of working conditions, the tablets are designed to be reliable and light with long battery life.

With the Galaxy Note's innovative S Pen, practitioners can write prescriptions and orders and take advantage of integrated handwriting recognition. It also offers Wi-Fi Direct and Bluetooth for transmitting information to other peripherals, such as digital printers.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for enterprises with healthcare is security. In a recent IDG Research survey, 57 percent of respondents cite security as an issue when deploying tablets. To address these issues, Samsung created the SAFE™ (Samsung For Enterprise) program, which incorporates the key capabilities necessary to ensure secure and reliable access to corporate data.

Samsung's experience in the healthcare industry ensures that its tablets—and their interaction with other systems specific to healthcare—support the fundamental twin goals of improved patient care and increased operational efficiency.

▶ To learn more, go to
   www.samsung.com/healthcare.

[1]HIMSS Analytics, "2nd Annual Mobile Technology Survey," December 2012

Samsung Tablets for Healthcare:

▶ Galaxy Tab S (8.4" and 10.5")
▶ Galaxy Note® Pro 12.2 featuring S Pen
▶ Samsung Knox Enterprise-Grade Security