

Patient kiosks expected to proliferate

Publish date: Apr 24, 2009

By: Kathy Method

Source: InfoTech Bulletin



Fewer than 10 percent of medical facilities currently use self-service patient kiosks in any capacity, but look for them to rapidly become common sights as more institutions install them and patients get to use them, a recent report says.

Self-service kiosks are nothing new in the marketplace. People use them at grocery stores, airports, and banks. That same technology is finding its way into healthcare facilities.

Authors Jared Rhoads and Erica Drazen researched the few hospitals that are using patient kiosks consistently and detailed their findings in a report written for the California HealthCare Foundation.

Kiosks are now most commonly used as informational devices to direct patients around large medical facilities, but their future looks to be much more robust.

In the ambulatory setting, institutions use them as front-office check-in stations, where patients can provide identification and insurance information, update personal data, process co-pays, answer basic questions, and verify appointments—details formerly taken care of at a receptionist's desk.

In follow-up surveys, patients reported liking the kiosks because check-in was faster and they felt a sense of privacy and confidentiality. Staff reported liking the kiosks because they freed them up to do more complex tasks such as processing referrals and medications at check-out.

In an emergency room setting, kiosks can streamline the registration process, ask screening questions about symptoms and pain, and may be used as triage stations, equipped with a blood pressure cuff, pulse oximeter, and weight scale. Nurses at the Newark Beth Israel Medical Center ER reported that their patient kiosks cut the average wait time by an hour and that the number of patients who left the ER without being seen dropped 13 percent. Patient satisfaction ratings averaged 75 percent, the report says.

Kiosk technology exists and is easily available, so implementation is relatively uncomplicated and costs are minimal, the study found. The key to their success will be in how and where they are deployed, but once done, their benefits of improved patient satisfaction and greater operational efficiency will create a positive atmosphere for patients and staff alike, the researchers concluded.

END OF ARTICLE