

The Medical Office of Today or Tomorrow

I've been thinking about the medical office of the future. How would you design a building today that is meant to take you into the future? Here are my thoughts.

One of the hallmarks of a well-designed office, today or tomorrow, is **flexibility**. You want as much functionality as you can possibly get out of each space and use each space for as many purposes as possible.

For instance, a large room with lots of voice and data jacks or wireless and electrical outlets might be used for:

1. Physician meetings, staff meetings or parties
2. Group patient visits
3. In-house health fair
4. Staff or patient training
5. Public meetings
6. War room for disaster management or ad hoc project (medical record scanning prior to an EMR go-live)
7. Conversion to workstations for a merger with another group
8. Place to do group sports or college physicals, flu shot clinics, DOT physicals

I see reception and waiting areas getting smaller as patients have less time and are less willing to wait. Patients may not have to wait at all if you are sending them a text message or Twitter when the doctor is ready to see them. Some practices will not have waiting areas as patients will be escorted directly into exam rooms where the entire visit, from soup to nuts, will take place. Instead of going to the lab, the lab might go to the patient.

Registration may be replaced by check-in kiosks that totally

automate the process, including a vitals booth which takes the patient's weight, blood pressure, oxygen levels and temperature. Patients and their demographic and insurance information may be identified by fingerprints or iris scans. You may have a receptionist avatar greeting patients.

Fixtures are movable – storage cabinets are on wheels and not permanently attached to walls. Any room can be an exam room, a treatment room, a test room, a procedure room, simply by moving the cabinet with the needed items and the machines, which will be handheld. See an example **here**.

Providers' phones are their everything. Their mail, patient records, test results, journals, phone calls, and their family pictures are on their phone, so no need for an "office."

As always, non revenue-producing space is minimized and **revenue-producing space is maximized**.

The need for storage of paper (records, forms, etc.) is minimized because everything is digitized and stored on the cloud. The need for staff workstations is minimized because many staff work for the practice from home.

Medical records are not viewed on computer screens, they are projected onto walls in any room, at any time. See the TED Talk on the Sixth Sense technology **here**.

Many patients are seen at home or in the nursing home, with the provider in the office using telemedicine technology or virtual office visits.

Medication samples will not be given at the physician office – they will be distributed at the pharmacy. All medications will be samples (no cost) until it is established that it is the effective medication for that patient's problem.

Here's a neat video from Microsoft about healthcare of the future. It will get your mind racing about the possibilities.

Microsoft Health – Future Vision from Microsoft Feed on Vimeo.

It's frightening and exciting – might there be no need at all for brick and mortar physician offices? I think it's very likely.

What are your ideas about the medical office of the future?