

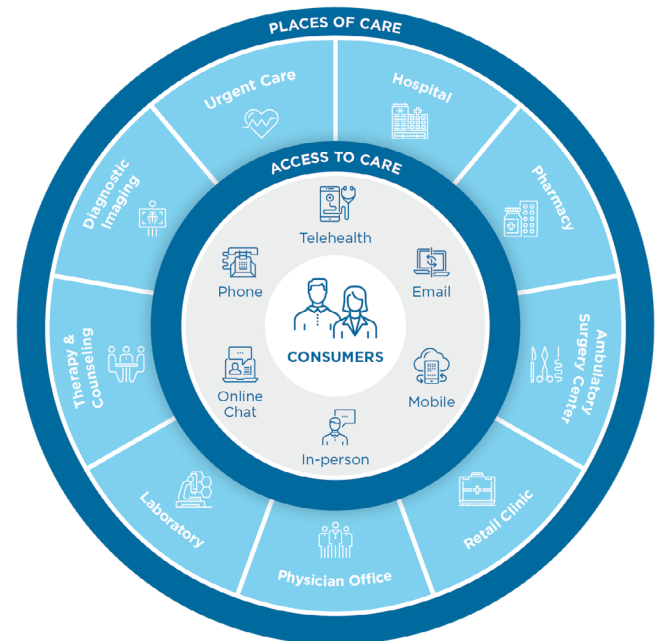
HOW TECHNOLOGY IS PUTTING CONSUMERS AT THE CENTER OF HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

By Jason Greenwald

Over the next seven years, new technologies will drastically change the healthcare industry and place patients in control of their care. Under the current healthcare model, customer service is simply a phone number to call to dispute a hospital bill. In the future customer service will be at the core of the healthcare experience providing holistic care that keeps patients healthy and provides high-quality service by offering more timely, convenient and personalized care. Technology will be critical in providing this consumer-centric care when, where and how patients want to receive it.

Delivering Care How Patients Want it

Traditionally, getting sick means calling for an appointment, waiting on hold to schedule an appointment, traveling to a doctor's office, waiting for an appointment, feeling rushed through the appointment, waiting for lab tests, receiving a lengthy list of instructions for treating the condition and waiting to have contact with the physician until a follow-up visit. This complex and time-consuming care delivery system will disappear as emerging technology platforms become mainstream. Websites like [ZocDoc](#) allow patients to review and compare physicians, and schedule same-day appointments. This makes it easier for patients to get care when they need it and easier for physicians to bring in patients, potentially increasing their revenue. Home visits with upfront costs and longer appointments



are available from the startup [Heal](#). Another startup, [Pager](#), offers online chats to triage care and then coordinates the next step of care via videoconferencing, teleconferencing or in-home appointments based on the patient's need. With each of these platforms, patients bypass the red tape of the current model and receive more convenient and personalized care.

Healthcare systems must create strategic plans to reinvent their care delivery models to incorporate these technologies if they want to compete with new industry entrants.

Delivering Care When and Where Patients Want It

Technology is moving healthcare outside the four walls of the hospital, the outpatient center and the physician office building, and delivering it in almost any location. By moving care to a place and time that fits a patient's schedule, receiving care will be as convenient as withdrawing money from an ATM or having groceries delivered to your home.

Technologies like [Siemens Healthliners' Mobile MRI Scanner](#) that can fit in a small trailer and [Abbott's i-STAT](#) that performs blood tests in minutes with just a few drops of blood are just a few examples of using technology to bring healthcare to patients, wherever they are. Several organizations, including [NimbleRX](#) and [GetMyRX](#), offer same-day prescription delivery. This improves the patient experience by eliminating a trip to a brick-and-mortar pharmacy and puts the patient in control of when and where they receive their prescription.

[iSono Health](#) has developed a portable device that allows women to perform their own monthly breast scans. After completing the two-to three-minute ultrasound scan, iSono's software compares these images to the woman's previous scans and detects any changes. The woman's physician also receives the images for additional analysis. This device not only moves care to a more convenient location but offers the potential to improve health outcomes by diagnosing breast cancer sooner.

By placing bets on technology investments that will move services away from brick-and-mortar spaces, leaders can position their organizations to thrive in the future world of healthcare.

What About Wearables?

When wearables like [Fitbit](#) and the [Apple Watch](#) burst onto the scene, they were expected to transform healthcare, but they have not done so. Just [25 percent of Americans own a wearable](#). Between the cost of the devices, limited adoption amongst Americans and the loss of interest among those who own them, these devices have yet to make an impact. Device purchasers often lose interest in these high-tech devices because they don't have an incentive to continue tracking or make lifestyle changes based on the data collected. For physicians, the lack of integration between wearables and electronic health records (EHRs) makes it difficult to connect wearable data with other health information. As a result, the average person may find wearables to be a fun, short-term experiment, but unless a wearable can provide meaningful insights to physicians, healthcare organizations should not invest in wearables for every patient.

Instead, they should focus on investing in and developing wearable technologies that enhance a physician's ability to provide care by syncing critical health data and EHRs. For example, Geisinger Health System and Purdue Pharma are conducting a study to determine if [wearables can improve pain management](#). In the study, the Apple Watch collects patient health information and a self-reported pain rating. This data is then synced with their EHR allowing physicians to monitor patients' pain remotely and recommend non-opioid approaches to pain management more quickly with a goal of reducing the need for pain medication.

Healthcare organizations should reconsider the "wearable for everyone" concept that once appeared to be the future of healthcare and instead place bets on technology investments that provide meaningful insights, demonstrate value and lead to improved patient outcomes.

Action Plan for Incumbent Healthcare Organizations

Everyone wants a piece of healthcare's future including startups like ZocDoc, industry incumbents like Abbott, and new players in the healthcare space like Amazon, Apple and Google. They are all racing to develop technologies that will provide a consumer-centric healthcare experience. Meanwhile industry incumbents have done little to develop new technology, change existing workflows or innovate care delivery models. Rather than continuing to stand by as the new entrants make their moves, healthcare organizations must begin identifying, integrating and optimizing technology investments that will transform care delivery and improve care outcomes.

While healthcare organizations shouldn't adopt every single piece of new technology, leaders should ask the following questions to help access the right technologies for their organizations:

- What care will I need to provide to my patients?
- Can I provide it at a lower cost?
- How can I provide care in a location that is more convenient for my patients?
- How can I make the experience more seamless and personal?

Organizations that develop a plan to provide consumer-centric care and identify technologies that will help deliver on those strategic objectives will position themselves for success.

How to Unlock Value From Technology Investments

Make strategic investments.

Find technologies that let you provide care at a lower cost or in a more convenient location and do it seamlessly. These are worthwhile investments.

Make value-driven growth a priority.

Find ways to use technology to reduce costs for patients and the organization, replace services that are resource intensive or manage chronic conditions more seamlessly.

Know your organization.

Small community hospitals do not have the wherewithal and infrastructure to create or buy new technologies and should collaborate with other organizations. However larger systems that have the resources to develop new technologies could do so and sell licenses for the technology to other systems.

Interoperability is key.

Partner with organizations creating technologies that are compatible with your organization's existing technology infrastructure.

Scalability matters.

Before investing in a technology or building your own, consider how easily the technology could be scaled to align with future goals. Technologies that can be used across several systems will be better investments as they offer the opportunity to sell the product to other organizations.



huronconsultinggroup.com

© 2018 Huron Consulting Group Inc. and affiliates. All rights reserved. Huron is a management consulting firm and not a CPA firm, and does not provide attest services, audits, or other engagements in accordance with standards established by the AICPA or auditing standards promulgated by the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board ("PCAOB"). Huron is not a law firm; it does not offer, and is not authorized to provide, legal advice or counseling in any jurisdiction. MU17070