

# Technology Trends in Healthcare

We recently sat down with Carla Hill, the vice president of Healthcare Marketing at [Business Furniture LLC](#) in Indianapolis. The award-winning company is celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> year anniversary in 2012, and is a leading office and healthcare furniture provider in the Midwest. We wanted to get Hill's perspective on technology in healthcare: where it is and where it's going.

Hill agreed with us – technology in healthcare is a hot topic. She referenced a major project she is working on as an example of a facility transitioning from using minimal technology to all the offerings of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are currently moving from buildings over 100 years old into new LEED-certified, state-of-the-art facilities designed by HOK. She led an effort to conduct surveys, observe culture, and look at organizational structure to provide input into the design of a new building. Technology is a huge part of their plan and vision moving forward; it impacts everything.

The hospital she is working on once was a leader in technology adoption. In the 1970's, it was one of the first hospitals to have EMR in the ambulances, but now most competing hospitals have caught up or surpassed their tech efforts.

Their ultimate goal with the new hospital is to go paperless, but the current building planning is ahead of the available technology infrastructure. And top leadership hasn't made a decision yet on what technology they necessarily want – they're understandably hesitant to make a big purchase that they are not totally confident in. It's almost a catch-22: physicians need a technology infrastructure that will work for them now and in the short and long-term future.

We also spoke to Mark Hagland, editor-in-chief of [Healthcare Informatics](#), to get his perspective on this dichotomy between the need for technology now and the need to be able to plan for its evolution in the not-so-distant future. He concurred with Hill about the current state of healthcare technology; with clinicians adopting more technology and patients bringing in their own devices, standardization is near impossible. He compared it to when cars were first going mainstream and each manufacturer made their automobiles slightly different, with steering columns, brakes and gas pedals all in different places. This, predictably, led to all sorts of accidents; something hospitals and healthcare facilities can't afford.

Hagland emphasized that there is hope, however, that healthcare technology won't be this "wild West" for much longer. He envisions standardization happening in the next 5 years or so, with a smaller number of apps to choose from and better mobile app infrastructure. In the pre-Google era, there were a number of search engines to choose from, with none being quite good enough to become preeminent; then Google came along and ever since, if we need to search for something, we just "Google" it. Hagland foresees something similar happening here. One or several vendors will create a best-in-class product, and that will pave the road to standardization.

Physicians are like nomads, moving from building to building. They are the ultimate mobile worker, and as technology becomes smaller and more detached and handheld, mobility is even more important to them. It's crucial to align the hospital's technology decisions with the work habits and patterns of its employees, but it's the ever-changing landscape of technology that is delaying these decisions, and making them so difficult. Additionally, how people work within the hospital infrastructure, such as the patient room, will change as technology continues to evolve.

Both Hagland and Hill identified security as a major concern for technology mobility in healthcare, although new advances, like the transition of more data to 'the cloud', are beginning to solve these issues. Also, as technology becomes smaller, such as a mobile phone, the more easily it can become lost and the greater risk to security. Hagland suggested however, that in the case of loss or theft, a device could be wiped clear of all memory, thus protecting whatever patient info was stored on that device.

The impact technology can have on patients and caregivers, however, makes it impossible to ignore: for patients, reducing the redundancy of having to fill out the same paperwork on every visit, and for caregivers, helping to reduce errors and redundancies, and making reminders more visible is of great benefit. Making information accessible at their fingertips will prove invaluable.

Where do you think the future of technology in healthcare is going?

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