With the rise of technology, high-definition TVs are starting to become commonplace, appearing in virtually every home. And no longer is TV exclusive to the domestic home as many hospitals contain the same home-like comforts in an attempt to increase patient satisfaction.

With the increased need and awareness for patient safety, a distinct set of TVs, healthcare-grade models, has emerged. However, many healthcare facilities ask, “Why not purchase and install a regular consumer TV from a discount store in my hospital?” With cost differences often favoring consumer TVs, it would be easy for purchasing decisions to be swayed, but it is important to remember hospital-grade TVs are designed with specific features that consumer TVs cannot offer.

SATISFYING STRICT STANDARDS

For a product to be sold on the market, it must satisfy safety standards set by Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. The UL is an independent body responsible for ensuring product safety. It has developed standards and test procedures largely based on a product’s construction and safe performance. Additional requirements have been created for products used in specialized applications, including TVs in healthcare facilities.

Other regulatory agencies, such as the National Fire Protection Agency, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and the National Electrical Code, also recognize the importance of equipment safety. All have issued detailed regulations that emphasize the significance of using a safety-listed product in the patient-care area.

Healthcare TVs offer unique benefits and are tailored to specifically meet facilities’ needs. Compared to consumer sets, these TVs are built with features that make them more suitable and accommodating to hospital usage. For this reason, thermal characteristics enable healthcare displays to withstand long operating hours.

Healthcare TVs incorporate other appropriate features that are not necessary for consumer sets. One main difference is the construction of the healthcare set, which is built to ensure patient safety. By complying with more stringent UL standards, healthcare models are sturdier and safer than consumer models. One UL requirement is enclosures used in hospital-grade products must withstand twice the force from an impact than other displays. Therefore, hospital TVs are more durable and less easy to damage.

In addition, these displays offer numerous features intended to enable hospital efficiency and patient satisfaction, such as USB cloning technology, volume-limit controls, auto-sensing side...
inputs and a pillow speaker interface. Like commercial models, healthcare TVs also offer front-control panel locking to prevent menu settings from being changed accidentally by staff and patients. However, the biggest separator between healthcare sets and other models is the warranty. Only healthcare-grade TVs provide warranties that cover hospital use. Facilities may not save long-term if they opt for commercial and consumer sets.

TUNING IN TO SAFETY

Hospitals aiming to save dollars with commercial and consumer sets run a risk. Facilities that do not purchase or properly install the appropriate product can be making a big mistake. While TVs may seem harmless, plenty of household examples serve as a warning on paying attention to safety.

The shorter life spans of consumer sets lend to a lack of durability and reliability. With fewer regulations and safety precautions, consumer-grade TVs have TVs, fell on them. The study, published in the journal Clinical Pediatrics, found that such injuries had risen 41 percent since 1990. Most point to today’s flat-panel displays as the reason for the increase. It would seem that injuries should decrease considering displays are becoming thinner and lighter. However, there has been a trend in ever-increasing screen sizes. People want a big screen and thin display. While these flat-screen TVs are lighter compared to traditional bulky models, they still pack often as much as 100 pounds of circuitry and glass into a panel only a few inches thick. Even a small flat-screen is still a big piece of glass surrounded by sharp plastic and metal.

The thinness of flat-panel displays causes many to overlook the potential danger when inexpertly installed. Flat-panel TVs have narrow centers of gravity, making them top-heavy and susceptible to toppling over. Top-heavy TVs cannot be expected to balance on lightweight, narrow stands or to hang from improperly installed wall brackets. People too frequently make installation mistakes.

The statistics on home-related TV injuries stress the importance of buying a safe and appropriate product. With this knowledge, it seems clear that healthcare TVs are the best bet in regards to safety. The research showed a surprisingly high mortality rate, as well.

Another study reported that nearly 17,000 children suffered injuries in 2007 after heavy or unstable furniture, such as caused serious, even fatal, injuries. The more durable chassis and healthcare design features, as well as the use of a trusted installation partner would pay dividends toward lowering the hospital’s exposure to liability.

Unfortunately, research shows that children are the most likely to suffer TV-related injuries. The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission recently reported the majority of TV-related injuries occur in toddlers. The research showed a surprisingly high mortality rate, as well.

A set that may be cheaper now could be more expensive if uncovered by a warranty. A set not intended for hospital use could be more likely to cause injury and serious legal ramifications. When reviewing the differences between TV grades, it is easy to see why such distinctions were made in the first place. If a healthcare provider is forward-looking, the task of choosing a TV is an easy one.

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