

Hospital grade vs. consumer grade TVs: How healthcare facilities meet a high standard of safety and satisfaction

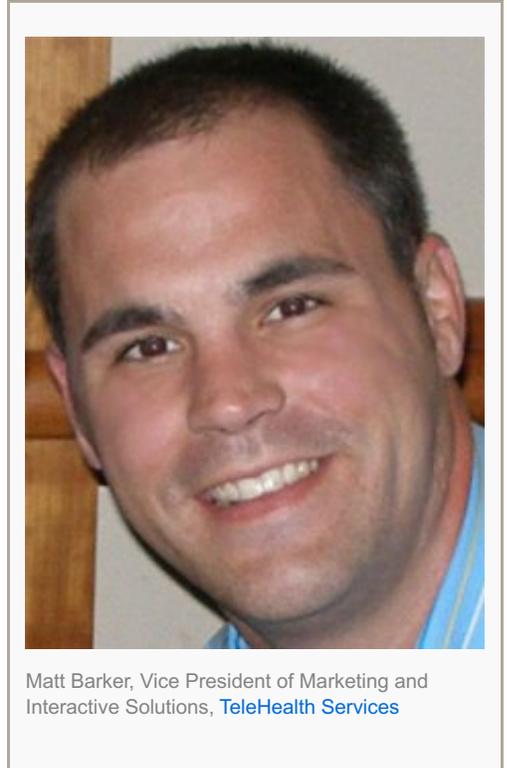
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The focus on customer-centric care and value-based reimbursements has led hospitals to see the patient experience as a way to differentiate their services and improve patient satisfaction ratings. One way hospitals are meeting these objectives is an infrastructure that provides quality entertainment on Smart HD televisions on par with what patients experience when they are at home or in a hotel room. Healthcare has joined the hospitality industry in recognizing that quality entertainment improves the experience and builds brand loyalty.

As a part of this decision, some wonder whether a healthcare-grade television is really necessary. Prices have dropped considerably over the past few years on high-definition televisions, making them attractive to incorporate this technology into a large facility with many patient rooms. With cost variances often favoring the consumer models, it could seem like an easy choice to purchase a consumer television over a healthcare-grade television. However, making a decision on price alone could be more costly for many healthcare facilities.

Compared to consumer sets, healthcare televisions are engineered and constructed with a different end user in mind. Manufacturers design healthcare-grade HDTV sets specifically for use in the hospital setting and to withstand enhanced cleaning for infection control and long operating hours.



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Designed for operational efficiency

Healthcare-grade televisions meet safety regulations set by Underwriters Laboratories (UL), The Joint Commission, and the National Fire Protection Association's National Electrical Code. These TVs meet the more rigorous electrical standards to operate in the oxygen-rich environments of hospitals, and they are sturdier than consumer models. They also include numerous features designed to ease installation and enhance patient satisfaction, such as volume-limit controls, inputs for pillow speaker control, front panel lock out, and mass central cloning management. Facility managers also benefit from set-up via network cloning capabilities and decoding technology that ensures all satellite and cable channels meet digital rights protection protocols. In addition, only healthcare TVs provide warranties that cover hospital use.

Designed for patient safety

Healthcare televisions are developed specifically with hospital and patient safety in mind. Sets must meet construction and safety standards established by UL. Features such as rounded corners, touch-panel membrane buttons, and the removal of enclosures on non-vertical surfaces provide a much safer patient care environment. Grounded plugs, lower allowed levels of electrical current leakage, and an all-pole power switch decrease the likelihood of shock. Signaling and nurse call controls used with audio and video products must also meet additional reliability and safety criteria, while consumer-grade products have no such requirement.



Designed for patient satisfaction

Clinicians want their patients to have a comforting experience, and patient satisfaction is a priority. Healthcare televisions aid in creating a more “home-like” atmosphere and experience as well as making a much more efficient workflow for clinicians. Smart applications contribute to an enjoyable patient experience by creating welcome distractions and keeping patients connected. Auto-sensing side inputs, dedicated input channels, casting capabilities to stream content from other devices and additional smart applications allow multiple sources of content from a variety of technologies displayed quickly and easily.

In addition, many healthcare sets have Pro:Idiom digital rights management necessary to deliver HD cable channels in a MATV environment without a set-top box at each set. The reason has to do with encryption of cable channels. Pro:Idiom is the encryption standard used by DirecTV, Dish and many cable companies. Cable networks including ESPN, Disney and HGTV require protection of their HD signals as a part of their copyright standards. To decrypt these protected signals, every TV set must have either internal decryption, or a set-top box must be installed with decryption.

Consumer TVs do not have decryption built in because cable and satellite companies are going to install a receiver in your home. Hospitals typically do not put a receiver at every TV due to higher cost, less desirable room aesthetics, difficult mounting issues and higher maintenance and theft among other reasons. To avoid third-party hardware and still deliver HD signals, many hospital televisions sets today have Pro:Idiom built in.

Hospital working environments are extremely complicated and harbor many unique challenges. Healthcare grade televisions are designed specifically to accommodate those intricacies. Consumer televisions can be very attractive from a pricing standpoint, but they can also pose major liabilities and roadblocks for the facility. Healthcare televisions provide the features needed for hospitals, as well as an enhanced peace of mind.

The focus on customer-centric care and value-based reimbursements has led hospitals to see patient experience as a way to differentiate their services and improve patient satisfaction ratings. Hospitals are making investments in technology infrastructure and HDTV to provide quality entertainment that aligns with what patients experience when

they are at home or in a hotel room.

Internet Protocol television (IPTV) is evolving as a standard that healthcare is embracing to develop patient services at the bedside. Many hospitals, especially for new buildings, are adopting IPTV to deliver TV programming, along with interactive care, voice, and data services in patient rooms to entertain and educate patients. IPTV enables HDTV programming through the hospital's computing network, thereby reducing cabling costs and creating operational efficiencies. The convergence of data and video networks alleviates the need to install and maintain the separate network infrastructure required to support television signals through conventional coaxial cables and set-top boxes for each TV.

Taking a "future proof" approach supports more advanced patient engagement, such as displaying medical records and providing other innovative healthcare services using bedside televisions. This trend is an example of how hospital patient entertainment, education and engagement technology is leapfrogging the consumer market to deliver flexible, scalable and interactive solutions that meet the needs of hospitals today while anticipating future applications and requirements. With advancing technologies and the resulting increase in patient expectations, hospitals are looking at IPTV as a smart and effective way to upgrade the patient experience and differentiate their facility in an increasingly competitive healthcare environment.

Televisions represent some of the most valuable real estate in a patient's room for communications, yet many hospital TV network systems are not able to realize the full potential of transforming patient TVs into clinical assets that deliver essential patient satisfaction, education, and engagement. From professional engineering services, network infrastructure and healthcare-grade TVs to interactive patient entertainment and education programming, a comprehensive solutions partner provides true value. The exceptional patient experience with content programming and TVs specifically designed for healthcare environments helps foster a new brand image for the hospital and ensures more satisfied patients.

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