



Hospitals: What's Trending in 2018?

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It's a new year, and with that comes the obligatory lists ... you know, the best of, the predictions, the top trends. So what's trending in healthcare? Underlying all the predictions is a sure continuation of the industry's drive to a more consumer-driven, patient-centric model.

In its Top 12 Defining Healthcare Trends report, PwC's Health Research Institute notes, "[Patient experience is a priority](#) and not just a patient portal. Today's consumer is used to sophisticated shopping experiences, in which retailers harness consumer information to tailor how they interact with customers. As the healthcare industry turns toward paying more for value instead of volume, health companies will need to take this same approach and make strategic investments to improve patient experience."

What does that mean in terms of potential initiatives? It means hospitals will look for ways to make interactions with patients – whether digital or physical – easier, more customer-friendly.

Think "hotel-like." The easier the hotel makes it to book a visit online, see options for services, and clearly share rates in a transparent way – the more likely the traveler is to choose them. And, the more that our chosen hotel delivers on customer service, quality, comfort and cleanliness during our stay, the more loyal we are likely to be in recommending them to others, and using them again when we need a hotel.

For hospitals, customer-centricity might take the form of simplified interfaces for online scheduling before a stay, or interactive wayfinding screens on television kiosks throughout the hospital. [Giving patients more control](#) over their stay adds to their comfort and satisfaction. IT will continue to play a foundational role in the patient-centric model. Through interactive technology on patient room televisions, patients can order [room service from their televisions](#), what they want and when they want it. They can use interactive solutions on their TVs to request an extra blanket or to play soothing video-enhanced music to drown out hallway noise and fall asleep. They can [watch educational videos](#) to help them on their road to recovery.

Think "trip reviews." When those hotel stays or restaurant visits disappoint, consumers have no shortage of places to let others know in real time. A negative experience, left unresolved, can do irreparable damage to a hotel's reputation and business in little time. So too is the case with unhappy patients and their families, when service issues arise during their hospital stay. [Real-time patient feedback systems](#) are critical to enable hospitals to, first, know there is an issue and, second, resolve it quickly and satisfactorily. Left unattended, what may have been a minor issue initially could grow into a major negative complaint and low rating on that patient's post-stay HCAHPS survey. With real-time patient feedback through an interactive system, the patient can easily submit a question or concern, notifying the appropriate department, whose prompt service recovery can turn an unhappy patient into a satisfied one.

"Unless we continue to [improve the customer experience](#), customers will go elsewhere for care," says Northwell Health President and CEO Michael Dowling in a December post on Becker's Hospital Review. "The more competitive the market becomes, the more work we as providers must do to continually improve the patient experience and develop customer loyalty. This can partly be done through improving communication and curating a more retail-focused experience.

"This is unbelievably important, as patients now have more access and choice for their healthcare than ever before," he says. "This is not limited to the in-person experience, but also how hospitals and health systems communicate with patients to help them get information and make appointments."

Just as with hotels, consumer-driven healthcare depends on having the right people, processes and tools working together to the end goal: a patient-centric care environment. Technology solutions like [interactive patient engagement systems](#) are a linchpin in engaging patients in their care and giving them greater control of their hospital stay.

Read more insights on interactive patient engagement at EngagewithAllen.com.