Car Dealerships Have Something To Teach Hospitals

Suneel Dhand, M.D.

A couple of weeks ago I took my car in for its regular servicing. I've always had excellent service at this dealership and have gotten used to some pretty high standards. But on this particular visit, I was about to receive a dose of new technology as well. After I pulled my car into the garage, I was immediately greeted by a welcoming and friendly customer service agent. She had an iPad-like smart device with her, using it to promptly check my details and confirm exactly what I was bringing my car in for.

A question came up regarding whether a certain part had been replaced previously — my mileage meant that a replacement would soon be required — and she went through the old records to look into this. When I told her that I wasn't entirely sure because I lived in Florida for a year, she replied, "No problem, we can pull up all of those records as long as it was performed at a dealership!"

As she explained what might be needed, she was pulling up pictures on her screen and showing me all my car's previous service details. After this, I was politely shown the way inside to sit down, where I enjoyed complementary tea and muffins while working on my laptop. Just over an hour later, the same service agent came back and went over what had been done, again using the smart device. I paid what I owed, and went outside to where my car was waiting, fully cleaned with mints left on the passenger seat for me. I may be lucky to be able to take my car into such a terrific place, but the technology experience also made me think, why on earth don't we do something similar in health care? It was a quick, interactive and seamless experience.

While office-based doctors have made full use of the computers at their desks for a very long time, the same cannot to be said for how hospital doctors work with them. What I saw that day at the car dealership quite frankly serves to highlight how behind our technology is. All hospital doctors should be able to round on patients

with portable devices by their side. As well as pulling up records and placing orders, we should also be able to use our smart devices as an aid for educating our patients.

The current typical scenario is for a patient to ask the doctor something such as; “What is my white cell count this morning?” or “What exactly did the test report say?”, and for that doctor to be forced into saying, “Oh, I’ll have to go outside to the computer to check on that.”

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