

# Automated Patient Check-In

## Veterans Are Experiencing More Ease Than Ever When Checking In With VA

The VA Healthcare System has made enormous strides in improving patient services in order to continue the quality of world-class health care that veterans have come to expect and deserve. One such improvement has been the addition of automated patient check-in using self-service kiosks.

The VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System was the first within the VA Healthcare – VISN 4 network to automate the patient check-in process in conjunction with the opening of their consolidated business service center in October 2005. This venture was a result of wanting to improve and centralize all administrative functions for veterans in one area of the hospital that was easily accessible to patients and visitors. VAPHS successfully implemented the VA's first comprehensive self-service pre-registration and patient check-in system. The patient self-service system has reduced manual efforts and costs associated with pre-registration while also reducing the wait time for patients.

The system allows a patient to self check-in for appointments by using a combination of the Veteran Identification Card (VIC) and touch screen input at the kiosk. In order to meet HIPAA requirements, a privacy glare filter was incorporated into the screen so that the information can only be viewed by the veteran standing directly in front of the kiosk. The system is interactive and provides feedback based on configurable criteria designed by staff at VAPHS in order to correlate with the pre-registration program in Vista, the VA's electronic health record system. The configuration of the kiosks can be easily modified to meet the individual needs of other facilities within the VA.

The system provides a series of prompts for the veteran and queries the patient as to the accuracy of demographic data, next of kin, date of birth, insurance carrier and other information included in the 'pre-register a patient' option in Vista. The initial program was expanded in FY 2006 to include co-payment data on account balances. In addition, a customer service questionnaire was added that asks the patient at 90-day intervals about his/her experience in registration. If the information on the screen is correct, the patient merely responds by pressing a yes. At the completion of this process, a way-finder slip prints that includes the name, location and time of clinic appointment for that day. The paper does not contain any patient specific information that would violate a veteran's privacy if lost.

Numerous benefits have occurred following the installation of the self-service kiosks. One of the main outcomes has been the support the

Pittsburgh Kiosks



Philadelphia Kiosks



system has provided in clearing thousands of errors present in the organization's Vista database. Prior decentralization of pre-registration by the clinics led to inconsistencies in the manner in which pre-registration information was performed. Consolidating this function and educating staff working in registration has led to more than 8,000 corrections of addresses, next of kin, phone numbers, insurances, etc. The ratio of patients pre-registering at VAPHS has increased by 20% since implementation in October 2005. These changes have had far reaching effects in areas such as the mailroom. Prior to opening the consolidated business office and the installation of kiosks, thousands of letters were being returned each week that were undeliverable. This no longer occurs as continuous updates in patient demographics are now performed daily.

## Lebanon Kiosks



Additional positive outcomes related to the kiosks include the timely completion of means tests and verification of correct enrollments. If a patient is not correctly enrolled, he will not be able to pre-register at the kiosk and is instructed to see a clerk. The same process occurs with outdated means tests and other incorrect data in the system. This allows for all necessary corrections to be made prior to the patient proceeding to an appointment. Most importantly patients no longer wait in lines for 15 to 20 minutes as the flow through is almost instantaneous, which is quite impressive when you consider that VAPHS receives buses with 30 – 40 veterans at a time. Additionally, the kiosks have significantly reduced the amount of administrative tasks that VA clerks must perform allowing them more time to focus efforts on those veterans who have particular questions or require assistance.

The success of VAPHS has laid the ground work for implementation of the self-service kiosks at all facilities within the VA Healthcare – VISN 4. Philadelphia VAMC and Lebanon VAMC completed phase one of implementation in March of this year and are working to expand their capacity and implement additional functionalities. Butler VAMC will begin installation of the kiosks at the end of August. Clarksburg VAMC and Erie VAMC will begin installation of kiosks in October and Altoona VAMC and Wilmington VAMC will begin installation of kiosks by the end of November. Wilkes Barre VAMC expects to begin installation in November. Numerous Community Based Outpatient Clinics will also receive the self-service kiosks.