Point-of-Care Options for the Healthcare Industry

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Introduction/Background

As hospitals and clinics strive to provide doctors and nurses with better access to clinical information systems at the point-of-care, they're considering various point-of care options, often choosing between mobile computer carts or wall-mounted PCs, or a combination.

Some are concluding that carts are a good option because they can store medications and supplies in addition to computers. Others, however, are rejecting carts because of high maintenance requirements and poor nurse acceptance. And many are finding that workstations are more flexible than originally thought, offering medication and supply storage and locking systems.

To ensure you are making the best long-term investment for your healthcare environment, review these comparisons of carts vs. wall-mounted workstations.

Carts vs. Wall-Mounted Workstations

	CARTS ▼	WALL-MOUNTED WORKSTATIONS ▼
MOBILITY & CONVENIENCE	• Can roll into rooms and be used at point-of-care • Often obstruct hallways, posing fire hazards • More susceptible to theft/misplacement because of mobility • Optional work surface often 'bounces' as it is used • Computer equipment must match cart • Difficult to customize • Heavy and cumbersome at more than 100 lbs. • Pushing from room to room fatigues staff quickly	• Permanently placed at point-of-care or any place where access to information is needed • Small footprint that folds up to within inches of wall • Wide, sturdy work surface • Designed to fit computer equipment • Accommodates large monitors • Optional lockable storage area for medications and supplies • Permanently attached to wall and ready for use

Carts vs. Wall-Mounted Workstations

	CARTS ▼	WALL-MOUNTED WORKSTATIONS ▼
SECURITY OF EQUIPMENT & INFORMATION	• More susceptible to theft because of mobility • Equipment left exposed • Patient information left exposed and visible • Less secure wireless networks must be used	• Permanently mounted to wall, making them less susceptible to theft • Equipment secured behind retractable, lockable work surface • Patient information secure because work surface folds up to cover monitor when not in use
SUPPORT & MAINTENANCE	• Equipment more susceptible to incidental damage because it is mobile • Battery cycles limited and batteries must recharge • Larger monitors and faster computers reduce battery life • Computer equipment choices limited • Wireless network required/ connectivity problems • Moving parts susceptible to incidental damage	• Equipment less susceptible to incidental damage because it remains in static location • No batteries to replace/recharge • Accommodate wider range of computer equipment • Can be used with hard-wired or wireless networks • Fewer moving parts: sturdy, durable and virtually maintenance-free

Carts vs. Wall-Mounted Workstations

	CARTS ▾	WALL-MOUNTED WORKSTATIONS ▾
SAFETY & HYGIENE	• Sharp corners easily caught by equipment and personnel • Obstructive, posing fire code issues • Infection control difficult because of mobile nature • Risk of tipping or bumping into objects or people • Exposed wiring creates hazard • Height adjustability available • Safety training needed	• Rounded corners less likely to be caught by equipment or personnel • Very small footprint; closes to within inches of wall when not in use and can also be recessed • Easy to clean and stationary, so risk of spreading infection reduced • Fewer work-related injuries • Hidden wiring safer • Height adjustability available • No safety training needed

ECONOMICS	• Less up-front expense, but more expensive in long-term
	  – Maintenance costs higher
	  – Recharging/replacing batteries causes loss in productivity
	  – Equipment generally all-in-one and more expensive because of special needs (wireless, sizing, etc.)
	  – Overall breakdown occurs more often
	  – Theft occurs more often due to mobility
	• Requires use of extra carts while others are recharging
	• Additional entry points (carts) required for multiple users
		• Greater expense up-front, but less expensive in long-term
		  – Virtually maintenance-free
		  – No need to power-down computer; work surface closes to cover monitor
		  – Customizable to fit existing and future equipment
		  – Accommodate wider range of computer equipment
		  – Designed to last many years
		  – Theft generally not a problem
		• Placing information and technology at point-of-care improves staff efficiency, reduces staff fatigue, increases patient interaction

Initial Questions to Ask When Considering Point-of-Care Solutions:

At Proximity, we want to ensure you make the best long-term decision for your facility. Below are a few questions to consider asking your vendors when determining the best solution for you.

- What is the cost of a cart? What is the cost of a wall-mounted workstation?
  - Initial cost?
  - Annual maintenance costs?
    - Battery cost and life
    - Parts
    - Labor

- Is a wireless network required? Is there maintenance involved for the wireless network?
  - Operating Costs?
    - Time to return cart to recharging area and time to recharge?
    - Walking time?
    - Walking rate?

- How many units are required?
  - Consider wall-mounted workstations: one per room, plus other points of access.
  - Number of carts: number of rooms and number of points of access required at one time for others besides the nurse
    - Can cart be used while battery is recharging?
    - How much does cart weigh? Does weight affect walking time and fatigue?
    - What codes are relevant? How do these codes affect carts vs. wall-mounted workstations?

- Is space an issue? What are the constraints of a cart vs. a wall-mounted workstation?

- Is the ability to swivel toward the patient important? Does the wall-mounted workstation have this feature?

- Is height adjustment important? Is the unit height adjustable?

- Is the unit easy to clean? Will it meet infection control standards?

- Will the cart or wall-mounted workstation accommodate ALL the equipment you want to use?

- Will the cart or wall-mounted workstation be secure?

- How large is the work area of the unit?

- Now or in the future, will you put medications at the bedside?