



**Healthcare Leadership Network**  
*of the Delaware Valley*



**Bold Steps Forward**  
***Inspira Innovation***  
**by Melissa Fox**

Rapid changes in healthcare have created an exciting environment conducive to new innovations designed to improve patient or provider experience -- and the next decade will be no different. In a recent issue of Time Magazine, several innovations are predicted to continue to change the operational landscape of healthcare in the 2020's such as a pocket ultrasound, cancer-diagnosing artificial intelligence, 3-d digital hearts, virtual reality rehab, and the continued foray of non-health entities into healthcare (Time, 2019). These advances not only challenge the status quo of what care can be, but also serve as inspiration for health systems seeking to create a culture of innovation.

One such health system is Inspira Health Network, a non-profit health organization which has over 150 locations across South Jersey including Cumberland, Gloucester, Salem and Camden counties. As a regional health network, Inspira is not only dedicated to clinical and service excellence, but also has taken bold steps to foster a culture of innovation internally. The system has an Innovation Center and \$1 million Innovation Fund to support the development and implementation of cutting edge health technologies. The Innovation Center is 2,400 square feet and includes 4 collaboration spaces, robotic technology, a fully functional patient room to pilot new technologies and more.

A few years ago, Inspira launched the Health+ Technology Bars. The Health+ Technology Bars are free-standing service stations located inside two Inspira locations. The Health+ provides support at no cost to patients and are designed to be easily accessible and focused on the most common needs of patients.



Dave Johnson is the Vice President of Innovation at Inspira, and oversees the Innovation Center as well as related initiatives. I recently connected with Dave to get an update on the Health+ Technology Bars, and the impact they have had on patient experience.

1. **When did you officially launch the Tech Bar and what was the inspiration?** The Tech bars officially launched in Fall of 2017. There are currently two locations, one in the Vineland Medical Center Lobby and another location in the brand new Mullica Hill Medical Center. The inspiration was four-fold. First, personal monitoring devices were becoming more and more prevalent, accurate, and available. Second, the My Inspira App was forming and becoming a central location for our patients to track their personal medical records. Third we loved the concept of an Apple Genius bar where you could go for expert advice on all things Apple and knew we could do the same for all things related to digital health and Inspira digital access points. Lastly, we wanted to prove that giving patients the tools they need to increase their accountability for personal health can reduce the cost of care delivery.

2. **This model isn't something that you see often. What process did you go through internally to ensure widespread buy-in for the concept?** We first talked to clinicians and clinical support staff (health coaches) that had programs that this (Health+) could enhance. Enhance was the key. We already had high-touch programs for patients with chronic conditions. The process when a chronic patient was discharged from an inpatient stay would be to assign them a health coach who would call and discuss their care and make recommendations. Health+ Tech Bars added a technical component and allowed the health coaches to review bio-metric data collected from the blue devices Inspira issued to patients. The health coaches loved the idea of having comparable data that both the patients could trend themselves using the My Inspira App, and as discussion points during their checkup calls. The buy-in was immediate, and we asked the health coaches to help us design the program to ensure ease of use for both them and their patients.

3. **What kind of usage stats have you seen since launch and how do they measure against expectations?** The most obvious was NO READMISSIONS 30 days after a discharge from all participants that were signed up and engaged via checking in and recording their bio-metric data. Only one patient had to visit the ER 30 days after an inpatient stay. Patients were also surveyed and asked about anxiety as it related to their condition. 100% of the patients reported reduced anxiety and a feeling of comfort that Inspira Health+ was with them, even outside the walls of the hospital.

4. **How do you keep patients engaged with usage of the Tech Bar?** It's a voluntary program and patients are not charged for their devices. We educate patients on the benefits of the program and demonstrate how easy it is to monitor their care. Of course the tech bars are all in high visibility areas. Patients, Visitors, and Staff all have a natural curiosity to see what's going on at the tech bars!

5. **What would be your recommendation to other health systems who are considering new and different ways to use technology for patient engagement?** Technology can be intimidating to some people, especially patients that are vulnerable to a chronic condition. Take the time to educate your patients, hold their hands and make it as simple as possible to make the technology invisible. Explain it's just a tool to assist with their care -- the real care comes from their care takers.

#### References

(2019, October 25). 12 Innovations That Will Change Health Care and Medicine in the 2020s. *TIME*.