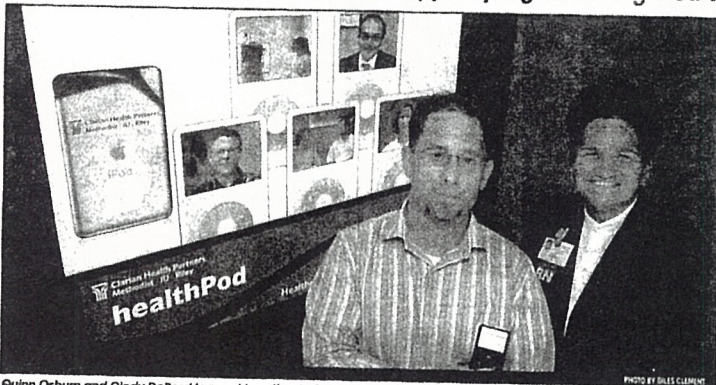


Healthcare: Anytime, anywhere

Clarian launches first-ever patient support program using iPod technology



Quinn Osburn and Cindy DeBord teamed together to form the first-ever portable patient education tool based on popular iPod technology.

BY LESLIE BENSON

Clarian Health Partners realized the necessity to focus expanding healthcare practices on bariatric patients after Indiana became top fourth in the nation for percentage of residents with obesity. Last year, 300 people applied for gastric bypass surgery at the Clarian Bariatric Center in Indianapolis, but after weeding out ineligible patients due to psychological or physical factors, only 139 surgeries were performed. To aid those patients, Quinn Osburn, creative design director of Business Innovations, teamed with the eight member staff at the center to form the first-ever portable patient education tool based on

popular iPod technology.

The healthPod, released publicly on July 11 after eight weeks of research and videotaping, is currently the only pilot program of its kind in the nation. Clarian will give away 15 free pilot healthPods to eligible patients, containing 15 gigabytes of bariatric surgery-related audio and video segments (each about 10-20 minutes in length), including everything from introductions to local doctors to treatment instructions one year after surgery. An extra 15 gigabytes of storage exists on the iPods to allow patients to download their own audio and video files, such as their favorite work-

out songs or healthy recipes to assist with new dietary needs.

Marshall Moon is the first patient to test out the healthPod. Clarian gave him the device in mid-July to use during his bariatric procedures. Within three weeks, he already utilized the healthPod's phase one (introduction to the hospital staff, some of which are former patients) and phase two (pre-operative education, surgical instruction and information for loved ones).

"His input is invaluable to us," says Cindy DeBord, RN and clinical resources manager in Technology Solutions and Education at Clarian Health

Systems. Clarian will use Moon's feedback on the program, as well as comments from future patients, to revise the healthPod into an even more user-friendly educational device.

According to DeBord, each phase on the healthPod includes former patients' testimonials and answers to questions asked of doctors about surgical procedures. "One of my favorites is how you prepare your children for such a surgery," she says. "These are testimonials from real people in Indianapolis and surrounding areas."

DeBord, who served as the project lead of the Bariatric Center for the healthPod's construction, helped determine healthPod content and edited Osburn's film footage. In phase three, she says patients are instructed on which foods to eat and which recipes they can follow. They also receive a guided grocery shopping tour for healthy eating habits, cooking and exercise classes.

"Ninety-five percent of content is podcasting," says DeBord. "We didn't use actors or scripts. So much of this is supportive education."

For individuals with more than a 40 percent body mass index, Terri Hohlt, RN, program administrator, Clarian Bariatric Programs, says that the center determines them eligible for gastric bypass surgery. For those individuals, surgery, support from loved ones and self-education are the stepping stones to achieving a healthi-

er lifestyle, including diet and exercise. "The healthPod teaches patients how to stay compliant with their dietary restrictions, including how to eat at family holidays and picnics," adds Hohlt. "We're making it easier for people to take into their everyday lives."

The healthPod can help regulate changing factors in a patient's life. "After the surgery, patients see elimination in hypertension, insulin dependence and diabetes," says DeBord. "They gain the ability to play and enjoy life again."

Osburn says patients can still choose to educate themselves and their families through videos, DVDs, literature and an intensive, four-hour pre-operative class.

"This will not replace human contact," says DeBord.

Such innovative patient education will transfer into other realms of healthcare in the future, says Osburn. Though the bariatric-themed healthPods will stay in the Clarian healthcare system, other venues have contacted the Bariatric Center in hopes of adopting similar programs. "Solid organ transplant patients and diabetes patients could also benefit from similar technology," says DeBord.

However, such a program does not come cheap. It cost Clarian more than \$120,000, including salaries, to put the entire healthPod system together. But for people like Osburn and DeBord, it has been worth it.

"We're looking for partnerships with other people who believe in supporting the community," says DeBord. "It would enable us to go bigger, faster."