

# What do people do in the waiting room?

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## Introduction

This report describe several activities that people do while waiting at the waiting room of the Geriatric Ambulatory Practice at Boston Medical Center. The people who wait at the waiting room are patients and their companion, usually friends or family of the clinic. These people are waiting to be called to see the doctor, waiting for his/her friend to finish getting a medical treatment or waiting to make an appointment. The author choose this activity to be observed because understanding the kind of activities people do in the waiting room, how they do it and understanding who those people are will help in designing technology which will improve the waiting experience.

## The people

The patients at the geriatric clinics are older adults, male and female of many races with varied english speaking ability. During an hour observation, I had the chance to meet male and female patients, white American, African American and a men who doesn't speak English – therefore cannot figure out where he come from. The patients are usually accompanied by a friend or family. One of the patient that I met during the observation was an African American old men who was accompanied by his white American young women friend. Another one is an old lady who doesn't seem to speak English well accompanied by a younger lady who speaks fluent English. I also met an American waiting for his wife to get a medical treatment.

## Artifacts

The waiting room is a clean and quiet room, located at the third floor of the building and it is easy to reach. There are chairs, a table and some magazines on the table, which according to one of the visitor rarely been updated. Health pamphlets are placed in a box hanged on the wall. Patients carried documents, most likely related to health (like medical records). At the wall, pictures and writings about elderly life is hang. The writing is about love and the life of elderly, in the form of prose and poetry. The kiosk is in the entrance, close it's poster.

## The activity

There are several types of activity that can be observed during an hour observation. Those activities are:

- Reading.  
Some of the visitors are reading magazines that is provided by the clinics. A visitor said that he had read those magazines more than once and suggest that there should be more magazines or newspaper in the waiting room. A visitor said that she never read the magazines that's there but she always bring and read a bible instead.
- Chatting  
Some of the visitor prefer to chat with their companion. Some of them are very friendly and helpful when we tried to talk to them.
- Working  
One of the visitor, most likely a companion of a patient, did some works (reading and writing). She was wearing working attire and seems to be from or going to work.
- Sitting/standing/walking  
Some of the visitor were just sitting and walking around the waiting room.
- None of the visitors tried to use the kiosk during the observation.

## Findings

We conducted 3 unstructured interview (4 visitors were being approached, one of them did not speak English and are not accompanied by an interpreter) with the visitors during observation and found out several things.

- Repeat visitor  
Most of the patients are repeat visitors. They have to visit the clinics in a regular basis. One of the patient said to visit the clinic at least 3 – 4 times in a year and another one, who is older, visit the clinic every month.
- Computer literacy  
The computer literacy of the visitors varied from low to high. One of the visitors that we interviewed has high computer literacy. He said to have three computers at home and has done some programming before. The other said to have a computer at home and likes to surf on the internet but he needs help from his friend due to his motor skill(shaking hands). One of the three visitors

has low level of computer literacy and said that she has never used a computer before. We tried to explain how different the kiosk is from the regular computer and by the end of the conversation, she tried the kiosk. We observed that though it seems obvious for someone that is used to IT, it is not the same to those who don't that one needs a guidance in using a touchscreen and button

- Interest in health information browsing.

When asked whether they are interested in learning more about health, one of the visitor said that he is interested and he said that it is better if it is not only educational but also entertaining. One of them simply saying "I don't know".

- Opinion and suggestion on Tanya

When asked about Tanya, one of the visitor, with high computer literacy, said that he never tried to use it for several reasons. He cannot relate the poster of Tanya that is hanged on the wall with the software because in the computer, Tanya's picture only shows up at the beginning. He suggested to have another poster that gives step by step instruction on how to use Tanya.

## Conclusion

- It is very important to design the kiosk to be "less intimidating" to those who is not used to computer. One of the visitor when asked wheter she ever tried to use the kiosk said "I never tried it because I don't know how to use computer."
- Even for someone who is able to use computer, a poster showing how to use the kiosk is needed as one of the visitor said "It is not obvious what Tanya is. There should be a poster showing how to use it".
- The visitor is interested in learning more about health and they prefer if it is also entertaining like what a visitor said "I'm interested in learning about health".
- The visitor would like the kiosk to be something that is entertaining and educationg. When asked which one he prefer to have in the kiosk - something entertaining or educationg, he replied "well, both. it's best if it's educationg and entertaining."