COVID–19 RESPONSE
PATIENT SELF-SORTING SIGNAGE SYSTEM
How to Rethink Wayfinding to Increase Infection Control and Decrease Patient Stress
Three Ways to Guide Hospital Visitors Seeking Coronavirus Care

As hospitals across the world flex to meet a surge of coronavirus cases, they are rapidly adapting their facilities to accommodate testing, infection control and inpatient care. However, navigating to, around, and in a hospital — particularly under these quickly-evolving circumstances — can be stressful and challenging. Studies show high levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, can decrease memory and critical thinking skills. Even during normal circumstances, 30 percent of hospital visitors find it difficult to get to the right place because they get lost. Today, some people with coronavirus symptoms, many severely ill or under duress, enter the hospital without alerting staff before they are triaged, potentially exposing others unnecessarily to the illness and requiring staff to then isolate them, triage and disinfect any spaces that may be contaminated. Moreover, wayfinding should accommodate various modes of arrival. Consider the hospital setting and what type of transportation people use to get there. For example, suburban hospitals tend to have more visitors arriving via car versus urban hospitals, where many people travel by foot, public transportation and rideshare. Accommodate each mode accordingly. People in personal vehicles with coronavirus symptoms can be directed to designated parking lots to wait, queue and even be tested from their car before entering the hospital. Meanwhile, visitors arriving by foot can be guided to special coronavirus sheltered triage areas outside of the emergency department.

1. Deploy a comprehensive wayfinding system for COVID-19.

Given this urgency, it’s critical to employ a consistent wayfinding system for COVID-19 to help direct patients to the right place. The good news is hospitals can quickly improve the patient experience now with a comprehensive set of environmental graphics that address a visitor’s spectrum of interactions — from pre-arrival to discharge — with united elements such as simple shapes, unique colors and a list of COVID-19 symptoms. Here are a few items to consider when creating signage for the crisis.

- **Graphic design and content recommendations**
  - Keep signage simple to decrease anxiety. Graphic design treatments such as using the color pink, which is unique from typical hospital signage colors, can help important messages pop. Recognizable shapes like circles or squares are both noticeable and simple. Much like retail stores, such as Ikea with its clear, visible and instantly recognizable signage, hospital wayfinding that relies on repetition, standardization and familiar shapes can help people quickly orient themselves and lead them through a space in an intuitive way.
  - Reduce text to only the essentials so directions are easy to digest. Outline primary symptoms of the coronavirus to help visitors differentiate between other illnesses like the flu. For example: “Follow the pink circles if you have COVID-19 symptoms such as a dry cough, fever and shortness of breath.” Signs for non-COVID medical conditions could include language such as: “Follow the green square for non-viral treatment or care.”
  - Consistent visuals and content should be carried through all steps of a hospital visitor’s journey, from pre-visit information online to outdoor signage at arrival, to indoor navigation once visitors are through the hospital entrance. It is key for hospitals to utilize a wayfinding system that is easy for patients and healthcare staff to understand and follows a unified theme.

- **Website notices**
  - To better welcome and inform visitors before they get to the hospital, it’s crucial to incorporate coronavirus-related wayfinding graphics into pre-visit messages. These should use the same colors and shapes as on hospital signage for COVID-19, so there is a consistent look and feel when a visitor arrives on site. Pre-visit information can include online notices featured on the top of a hospital’s homepage, on social media, or a dedicated landing page that can be regularly updated. For example, using a URL like “www.HospitalName.com/coronavirus” will rank higher in search results when patients query “Hospital Name Coronavirus.”

  - In addition, be sure to address: Where should people go to get tested? Are directions to the campus straightforward and concise? Provide these details succinctly up front to clarify any confusion. Given the highly-contagious nature of the coronavirus, this can help ensure visitors who may present with COVID-19 understand any special protocols ahead of arriving at the hospital to help keep the public and caregivers safe.

2. Prioritize signage location.

It’s important to consider the placement of signage to help guide visitors before and when they step foot into the hospital. Signage allows patients to self-triage prior to entering the hospital. It streamlines the process for emergency departments, reduces patient stress upon arrival and increases the ability to identify infectious patients, making arrival safer for all. It also provides guidance for patients that may not have seen pre-visit information online or forgot the instructions.

- **Site threshold informational signage**
  - Signs placed before entering the hospital campus can separate visitors with coronavirus symptoms from non-COVID-19 medical conditions.

- **Onsite directional signage**
  - Signs mounted to existing infrastructure outside of the hospital, such as light poles, can provide parking or walking directions for visitors. These signs could also include a list of COVID-19 symptoms.

- **Onsite A-frame signage**
  - Additional graphics, movable by staff, can provide further instructions to visitors, like which entrance to use or any safety precautions to take, before stepping into the hospital.

- **Interior wayfinding signage**
  - Temporary wall signage allow staff to direct the flow of patients and identify critical supply locations as needed. Floor decals spaced six or more feet apart can also ensure proper social distancing and direct patients to exam or isolation rooms. Slim interior stanchions can also be helpful, but should be properly secured so they remain in place.

3. Address accessibility.

Just as hospitals are designed to accommodate accessibility, wayfinding systems should too. Special graphic design treatments like dark outlines and clearly-recognizable shapes can help visitors with color blindness navigate a facility. Meanwhile, using iconography — visual symbols and images — can improve comprehension for non-English speakers.

By employing a wayfinding system that is simple, bold, and inclusive — produced with minimal logistics and a low implementation cost — hospitals can create a calming, safer and streamlined experience for visitors, patients and healthcare staff during the coronavirus pandemic, and also be prepared for future events that require specialized navigation.
Follow Pink Dots If You Have COVID-19 Symptoms. Sorry, No Visitors

Follow Green Square For Non-Viral Treatment Or Injury Care. Sorry, No Visitors

COVID-19 Patients Please Drive to Designated Area And Stay In Your Vehicle.

COVID-19 Patients • Injury • Surgery • Cancer • All Other Appointments

No COVID-19 Patients Beyond This Point

Please Stay In Your Vehicle Wait Here

COVID-19 GENERAL CARE

COVID-19 GENERAL CARE

Follow Pink Dots

Follow Green Square

Adjacent Highway Signage

Site Threshold Informational Signage

On-site Directional Signage

On-Site A-frame Signage

Ancillary Site Directional

Accompanies typical DOT "H" signage. Phenolic panel mounted to existing pole with nylon zip-ties

4x10 sheets of plywood with full digital print graphics. 4x4 lumber uprights set into packed earth footings.

Phenolic panel with digital print graphics. Mount to existing infrastructure (e.g. light poles) with heavy-duty nylon zip-ties. Arrows attached to panel with Velcro to allow user to determine pointing direction.

A-board product with digital print graphics. Moveable by staff. Arrows attached to panel with Velcro to allow user to determine pointing direction.

White Coroplast "Political Campaign" type sign. Wooden-stake upright. Direct digital printing. Arrow attached with Velcro to allow user to determine pointing direction.
Entrance Signage and Directional

White 3mm Sintra with direct digital print, mount with VHB tape.
If you are not in need of medical care and you do not have COVID-19 symptoms, please leave the hospital area immediately, and GO HOME.