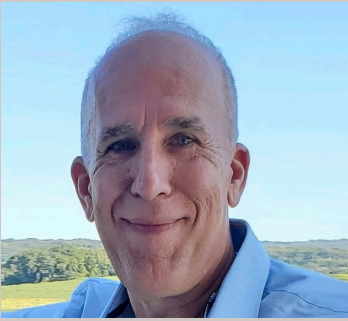


Bowles Rice VIEWS & VISIONS

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Jeff Feret
ArTECH Group LLC

Jeff Feret is Owner and President of ArTECH Group LLC, a general contracting and construction management firm in Crabtree, Pennsylvania. Feret has over 30 years of experience in both the architectural and construction industries. In his early career, Feret worked as a principle and senior associate at a Pittsburgh architecture firm. He later shifted to the contracting sector, where he became a senior project manager at a Pittsburgh-based general contracting firm. This joint experience helps ArTECH provide clients a comprehensive building solution.

Building a New Healthcare Delivery System

Like many industries during post-Covid times, the construction industry is also experiencing a lot of challenges. Owning a general contracting company where 80 percent of our work is in the healthcare industry, we have seen how hospital and medical development have changed and progressed.



Medical facilities are still needed more than ever, though with more availability and the popularity of telehealth and virtual visits, technological upgrades are on the rise. According to the American Medical Association, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, telehealth represented less than one percent of the total healthcare volume in the United States. Post-pandemic, as of a poll conducted in January 2022, that percentage has risen to 38 percent. Research has shown that for physicians, 85 percent indicated that

with various practices, and patient comfort. Currently, medical office buildings are being designed to suit the needs of each medical practice and provide flexibility for changing and progressing medical technologies, all the while providing comfort and convenience for patients. These outpatient facilities become a one-stop destination for examinations, labs and procedures, and are being designed to create better patient flow and provide an improved consumer experience.

“While the increasing use of telehealth seems like it would offset the bigger demand for outpatient care, it, in fact, complements these facilities.”

telehealth improved timeliness of care, 75 percent said that it allowed for high-quality care to be provided, and more than 70 percent of those physicians were motivated to increase their use of telehealth.

With the evolving use of telehealth, there is also a bigger demand for outpatient care with large medical office spaces that are designed for maximum efficiency, flexibility

While the increasing use of telehealth seems like it would offset the bigger demand for outpatient care, it, in fact, complements these facilities. Telehealth has allowed physicians and practitioners to reach farther into more rural communities that might often not be tapped into. And since procedures and treatments beyond certain pharmaceuticals require in-person visits, this wider telehealth reach can expand healthcare services. These

telehealth systems also prove to be important for those patients that might be recovering from surgeries. Doctors and surgeons can now check in with patients virtually versus having those patients return for a post-surgical visit.

Advancements not just in telehealth, but in healthcare technology and techniques overall, are also increasing the popularity of outpatient care. So, as previously mentioned regarding surgical procedures and follow-up with telehealth services, and because of the advancements in surgery and how some procedures have now become minimally invasive, these surgeries can now be performed at outpatient facilities. The use of high-definition cameras and the ability to make smaller incisions allow patients to see reduced costs, shorter recovery times, reduced risk of infection (compared to open surgeries) and potentially less pain with less need for pharmaceutical pain prescriptions. There is also the possibility of performing more than one procedure in an outpatient setting that offers more specialized practices, rather than having to go through multiple surgeries in a hospital setting. This can mean less anesthesia administration, less hospital labor, less time, which in turn reduces costs, less travel and less recovery time for the patient.

Working in the construction industry with a primary focus on the health care sector, I have seen these advancements firsthand and have contributed to the construction of these facilities to maximize the patient experience. The first large outpatient medical office building, which I have been a part of its ground-up construction, housed a variety of medical services and practices among 115,000 square feet and three stories. The medical practices included a wound center, large physical therapy and occupational therapy service

space, laboratory and imaging services (including mammography, ultrasound scans and bone density testing), primary care physicians and specialists in orthopedics, cardiology and gastroenterology, obstetrics and family planning practices and a family residency program. This particular medical office building belongs to a hospital system that utilizes newer technologies mentioned and provides patients with mobile patient portal access to allow patients up-to-date information between healthcare providers and those patients.

Aside from the outpatient facilities, the inpatient services in hospitals are getting upgraded, too, with the latest technologies. My firm has worked on upgrading operating rooms to include robotics for complex procedures for more precision, flexibility and control. I have also been a part of upgrading

pharmacies to allow pharmacists to play a more active role in patient care. Currently, my general contracting company is under contract to work with the same aforementioned hospital system in constructing another large outpatient medical office building in a different centralized location for the same benefits for patients. From my standpoint, the immediate future of healthcare development consists of evolving with the advancements of medical technology and telehealth, and continuing to provide large outpatient facilities with a diverse range of practices to continue to deliver further streamlined patient care and prevent hospital overcrowding. Even with material procurement being much more challenging post-Covid, my company actively prepares and extensively preplans management of procurement to still complete these advancements and upgrades on schedule. ▽

