

the election issue(s)

GOOD

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JAN. 20, 2009: WHAT THE WORLD WILL LOOK LIKE ⁷⁰

POLITICAL NASCAR ⁷⁶

FASCISTS FOR PRESIDENT ⁸⁴

AND REASONS TO VOTE FROM:

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MILTON GLASER / OSCAR THE GROUCH / and MORE

It's that time of the four years again.

INSIDE:

1,565 REASONS to push the button, pull the lever, check the box, cast the ballot, mail the envelope, or whatever you have to do



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Parkinson has
a bright idea:
simple, high-
tech solutions
to the problems
of medical care.



photographs by
ETHAN HILL

What's Up, Doc?

Jay Parkinson is dragging the medical profession into the IM age.

Shortly after the posters for Hello Health went up in Brooklyn, New York, last July, so did the graffiti. The subway ads, which featured the tagline "How do we feel today?" above several empty dialogue bubbles, were getting plastered with comments like "Sick!," "Nihilistic," and "Horny." To celebrate, Jay Parkinson uploaded photos of the vandalism to his blog. The caption read: "Awesome..."

"Doctors and companies that don't embrace communication are living in the pre-internet days," says Parkinson, 32, the physician behind a boutique medical practice combining old-fashioned house calls with web-based instant-message and video consultations, online scheduling, and digital records. "We invite you to chat with us and be open," he adds. "Chat all you want."

Last fall, before teaming up with two 30-something docs to launch the first Hello Health "node" in what was once a vintage-clothing shop, Parkinson started



The Hello Health posters were taken down 72 hours after launch. Apparently the company that oversees the MTA's posters decided that encouraging graffiti just wasn't kosher.

small: no office, no secretary, no manila file folders. Fresh off a residency at Johns Hopkins, the shaggy-haired MD designed a website and handed out business cards. In three months, "Dr. IM," as one trade magazine called him, was making house and webcam calls to 300 patients: Half were uninsured; all resided within two miles of his Williamsburg apartment. A week after the billboards were put up this summer, 250 more people called.

While "concierge" medicine isn't new, Parkinson, who charges \$35 per month, \$150 to \$250 for house calls, and \$50 to \$100 for online consultations, is at the forefront of a new breed of doctors pushing for a super-connected future in the face of an industry upgrading at a glacial pace. Today, only one-third of all U.S. doctors email patients, while fewer than 10 percent of small-practice physicians use digital records.

"Health care's been taken

combines electronic records with every communication feature he needed—which is why he built his own. Shortly after his solo practice took off last year, Myca, a Canadian software developer, came calling. After being named the company's chief medical officer, Parkinson spent months steering a team of 16 engineers who made his vision a reality. Now in use at Hello Health, Parkinson's interface gives doctors and patients immediate access to a searchable database of every diagnosis, immunization, allergy, and prescription. The platform is as straightforward to use as scheduling a trip to the Genius Bar on Apple.com.

The goal, however, isn't to hawk the software. Instead, Parkinson is looking to sign up like-minded MDs in congested urban communities nationwide (plans for a node in New York's West Village are under way). In exchange for free access to the

"Instead of waiting on the health-care industry to catch up, we're doing it."

away from the neighborhoods and become institutional," says Parkinson, who zips to appointments on an orange Vespa adorned with his chat-bubble logo. "There's no incentive to embrace new interfaces for communicating, because insurance doesn't pay for technology implementation. Instead of waiting on the health-care industry to catch up, we're doing it."

Big-tech players have been trying to jump-start health care with digital tools since the 1990s. Recently, Microsoft and Google introduced personal-health-record systems. Yet while a wave of web-2.0-like startups have released proprietary software aimed at doctors, most is expensive, impractical for smaller practices, or both.

Parkinson says no platform

platform and other tools (like an iPhone application), participating doctors will share revenue with the company. Fittingly, community feedback will affect the economics: Doctors reviewed positively on Hello Health's Yelp-like ratings system will pay less.

"To the 50-something-year-old doctors who've just discovered blogs and are beaten down by the system, I seem like some punk kid in Brooklyn," says Parkinson. "But patients are going to talk about how good we are as doctors or, perhaps, how they had a bad experience. We want [them] to be honest and to communicate. So let's start talking." —STEVEN LECKART