



# Not your usual hospital ad: 'If our beds are filled, it means we've failed'



**Norman T.**

National Telemedicine Consultant at The Radiant Life LLC

737 articles

+ Follow

## Mount Sinai Health System's bold ad campaign

Mount Sinai Health System's population health advertising campaign began two years after the 2013 merger of Continuum Health Partners and Mount Sinai Medical Center, two of New York City's largest hospital systems. The system rebranded as Mount Sinai Health System and began to cover three boroughs with seven hospitals, more than 6,000

physicians and more than 300 community locations. Leaders wanted to get that message out to the public.

So the organization launched a print ad campaign designed to showcase its impact on New York City neighborhoods, contributions to research and education and collaborations in local and global communities. Mount Sinai Health System said the campaign marked the final element of a multi-channel marketing effort, where the organization promoted its new brand across many digital and traditional channels.

The first print advertisement, headlined "Most New York neighborhoods have a deli, a dry cleaners, a Chinese restaurant and a Mount Sinai," debuted July 19, 2015, in *The New York Times*. The second advertisement, which debuted later in July 2015, declared "If our beds are filled, it means we've failed."

"The two themes of the campaign were, 'We're a different sort of system. We're in your community. We're accessible' and 'We're focused on health and wellness,'" said Niyum Gandhi, executive vice president and chief population health officer for Mount Sinai Health System. "We already had the brand recognition for other areas such as complex surgeries and oncology, but this was to say, 'We're focused on population health as well.'"

The first phase of the ad campaign, with the two population health advertisements and several others, ran through October 2015 and appeared in *The New York Times*, *The*

*Wall Street Journal*, and local commuter and community newspapers. Digital and social media campaigns also complemented the print ad campaign.

The print ad campaign, which was driven by the system's CEO and executive leadership, was a bold move for Mount Sinai Health System, as the organization was ultimately declaring, "We're not just about the hospital anymore."

The message was that "the system is still going to deliver exceptional care to those who need complex care. But we're looking at it and saying if we do our job up front in preventive care, there shouldn't be that many people in the hospital," Mr. Gandhi said.

He acknowledged that the efforts likely made some lower level administrators, who didn't understand the shift, or some physicians, uncomfortable. He recalled a conversation with the CEO of a different health system who was shocked when he saw Mount Sinai Health System's print advertisements.

"Some people might look at that and say, 'You don't care about the cutting-edge medicine. You don't care about the high-acuity care. But that's not true. We're just saying we care about something else also," Mr. Gandhi said.

Additionally, Mr. Gandhi said some people may have asked, "What if this population health is a fad? What if accountable care organizations become the next HMOs and we swing back in the other direction again?"

While those concerns could be legitimate, he said Mount Sinai Health System executives feel population health is the future.

"If you're announcing this bold and publicly, you have to stick to it," he said. "We're committed and we're comfortable with that. There are a lot of health systems out there who are viewing population health as a hedge strategy, and for them, I feel it would be a greater risk in doing something like this."

And so far, the feedback has generally been positive. Mr. Gandhi carried the advertisements around with him for months. When he shared the advertisements at meetings with payers and plan sponsors, people indicated they thought it was great Mount Sinai Health System is willing to publicly declare their commitment to population health.

Gordon Sleeper, with DeVito/Verdi ad agency in New York City, which worked on Mount Sinai Health system's print ad campaign, said he hasn't noticed any other hospital or health system willing to draw a line in the sand and say, "If our beds are filled, it means we've failed."

"Mount Sinai has very publicly committed to being a leader in population health. That said, many hospitals are advertising programs to promote healthier living, and many health systems are working to keep people healthier and out of the hospital," he said.

Mr. Sleeper said advertising population health to the public is more like public service advertising. Hospitals are trying to nudge customers into modifying bad habits: eat right, lose weight, exercise. He said this new style of advertising is trying to modify risk factors that can create health problems in the future.