The rapid evolution of health technology has tipped the scales—literally. Qardiobase is a fully integrated “smart scale” that measures not just your weight, but also muscle mass, body fat, and body mass index (BMI). It automatically recognizes multiple users, has a pregnancy mode for moms-to-be, and, of course, syncs with your smartphone to provide real-time data in the form of charts, statistics, and overall trends.

DESIGNING WELLNESS

Cars drive themselves. Drones deliver groceries. We talk to our phones and our phones talk back. If you blinked, you might have missed it: The future arrived while we were busy doing other things.

Modern life is dependent upon, if not flatly ruled by, technologies that barely existed a decade ago. We have precious little understanding of the invisible wizardry that sends our emails or navigates our GPS, but we’d be lost without it. Even our entertainment options, limited mostly to compact discs and cable networks at the turn of the 21st century, are boundless. Americans now spend more than four hours per day watching TV, and nearly three hours on mobile devices like phones and tablets.

And yet despite these great advancements—or perhaps in large part because of them—we face an unprecedented health crisis. Preventable, lifestyle-related conditions proliferate. Even here in Colorado, which routinely ranks as one of the healthiest states in the nation, more than half of all adults are overweight or obese. Depression and other mental health-related illness is at an all-time high. We are more equipped and better entertained than ever, but we aren’t exactly well. Call it the paradox of progress.

WE ARE MORE EQUIPPED AND BETTER ENTERTAINED THAN EVER, BUT WE AREN’T EXACTLY WELL. CALL IT THE PARADOX OF PROGRESS. COULD THE POWER OF DESIGN BE OUR SALVATION?

But wait, hang on, don’t give up just yet. There is hope on the horizon, and that hope lies in the power of the very technology that engulfs us. More precisely, it is the power of design that just might be our salvation.

Design, after all, is the force that allows for greater efficiencies among doctors and nurses in today’s hyper-connected healthcare facilities. It drives the development of everyday consumer products, which address issues of hygiene, hydration, sleep, fitness, and nutrition. It informs the evolution of modern workspaces, which support and encourage employee wellness. And in an age where 86 percent of mobile device use is devoted to web applications, it powers the cutting-edge programs that allow us to track, analyze, integrate, and improve our behavioral patterns in ways never before imagined.

We are a species at a crossroads. The stakes are immense and the road ahead is littered with obstacles and opportunity. For the sake of our health, and our loved ones, and our future: Let the burning embers of innovative design light the way.

FORGET POLITICAL GRIDLOCK AND NEVER-ENDING DEBATES ABOUT POLICY REFORM. IN THE FACE OF A NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS, A WAVE OF INTEGRATED DESIGN INNOVATIONS, FROM FACILITIES TO TECHNOLOGIES TO CONSUMER PRODUCTS, IS DISRUPTING THE SYSTEM AND GIVING CONSUMERS BETTER CONTROL OF THEIR OWN WELL-BEING.
A NEW YEAR INEVITABLY BRINGS WITH IT THE RESOLUTION TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF OURSELVES. NOW MORE THAN EVER, TECHNOLOGY PLAYS A ROLE IN THAT STRUGGLE. WANT TO GET IN BETTER SHAPE? THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT.

The average American now accesses more than 26 different apps per month, spending well over 37 hours Tweeting, Snapchatting, or crushing candy. But while gaming continues to dominate in terms of market share, health and fitness apps are increasingly well represented.

Some of these are relatively lightweight in nature. Streaks, for instance, is a simple push-button tool for developing new habits. If your goal includes trimming down, the app integrates with your iOS Health app to automatically track and log, say, how many steps you take each day. Rise is an app that lets you upload photos of your meals and share them with a nutrition “coach” who provides targeted feedback on ways to improve your diet. With some patience and a little discipline, apps like these can move the needle in your battle of the bulge.

But others take a more ambitious approach. Colorado-based DispatchHealth is on a mission to do nothing less than reshape the way health care is delivered. This golden opportunity.

Tech is a big part of what's enabled the whole idea of taking a portion of the ER and bringing it to you,” said Prather. “That would've been pretty difficult 20 years ago, but our lab essentially fits in a small suitcase now, and we're working on imaging and as much other technology as we can cram into that little vehicle.”

Josh Wills agrees. As Partner and Design Director at Consume + Create, Wills and his team serve instrumental in helping DispatchHealth develop not only their collateral materials, website, and app, but also their naming, logos, identity design, and the care wrap that adorns each mobile lab. Wills sees the integration of services like DispatchHealth with other emerging markets like fitness wearables as “the biggest potential and promise of this platform and technology.”

DispatchHealth is a Colorado-based company looking to provide a low-cost alternative for unnecessary emergency room visits—which remain roughly a third of all trips to the ER. The majority of acute health problems still require a trip to a hospital bed, but to an average cost of $200. DispatchHealth sees doctors or nurse practitioners at your door, fully equipped to handle most common ailments. “It's not one-size-fits-all. It's about getting the patient into the right model at the right time,” said Co-Founder Kevin Riddleberger. “And that's where leveraging technology allows us to extend our services outside the walls of the system, so that we can reach the lower more-efficient care to populations.”

UNDER PRESSURE

The CDC estimates 70 million American adults have high blood pressure—and only about half of those people have good control. The first step is consistent tracking, which is where the Wireless Blood Pressure Monitor comes in. Produced by Withings, makers of health technology products ranging from watches to scales to baby monitors, the Wireless Blood Pressure Monitor gives instant color-coded feedback, syncs directly with the Health Mate phone app, and makes sharing information with your doctor a snap.

Rise is an app that calculates your stress levels.

“With the advancement of wearable technology, with smartphones getting better with all our devices being more connected, the potential that technology has to really improve the healthcare and well-being of humans is huge, and in a way that's kind of automated. And I think that's where Dispatch is going, and to me it seems like being the bigger potential and promise of this platform and technology,” - Josh Wills, Consume + Create

All Instagram photos courtesy DispatchHealth.
A growing body of research suggests that much of our day-to-day behavior is the result of simple habits. Shake is an iPhone app that bills itself as “The to-do list that helps you form good habits.” Identify up to six tasks you’d like to make part of your daily routines, and Shake provides the positive reinforcement needed to cement those habits.

**A DRINKABLE BOOK?**

According to the World Health Organization, more than three million people die each year—almost entirely in developing nations—from water, sanitation, and hygiene-related causes. The Drinkable Book serves as both water filter and instruction manual for how and why to sanitize dirty drinking water. Founder Theresa Dankovich came up with the idea while working on her doctorate at McGill University, and while the finished product hasn’t come to market yet, it isn’t far off.

The concept is brilliantly simple. Sheets of extra-thick paper are embedded with silver nanoparticles, which kill dangerous bacteria and leave behind a healthy, refreshing dose of H2O. Each filter lasts several weeks, meaning a full book could provide the tools for about a year’s worth of clean water. Dankovich and her team are in the process of scaling up paper production and planning public health trials in Central America and Africa, with a goal of distributing 1,000 Drinkable Books (equalling 25,000 filters) around the world. Learn more and contribute at DrinkableBook.tilt.com.

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**WINTER 2015 | MODERN IN DENVER**

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**BREATHE EASIER**

We take more than 20,000 breaths per day. But what are we inhaling along the way? Atmotube (above) is a small, portable device that measures air pollution and harmful pollutants and sends real-time measurements to your phone. It’s designed for use by virtually anyone, but is especially helpful for asthmatics, children, and the elderly.

atmotube.com

**WATCH WHAT HAPPENS**

The fitness wearables market is booming, with brands like Fitbit and Jawbone clawing their way to prominence. But in the summer of 2015, Apple announced its own arrival amid a crowded field of competitors with the first-generation Apple Watch. This isn’t merely a timepiece or a fitness tracker. It could be a game-changer.

It isn’t just that the Apple Watch tracks your workouts, or that it integrates with other fitness apps, or that during yoga it can show you a picture of that reverse warrior pose you haven’t quite mastered. What makes it so compelling is that it does all these things while also looping in your email, text messages, and other staples typically associated with smartphones—and that it aspires to do so much more.

Commerce? Sure, make a purchase with a few clicks and a swipe. Navigation? No problem with built-in GPS and maps features. Convenience? Wave it in front of your hotel room door to gain access. And of course: lean heavily on the omnipresence of Siri. The interesting thing about the Apple Watch—which, to be fair, has drawn its share of detractors—is that fitness is one small, native element among many. They’ve already put a supercomputer in your pocket. Now they want to put one on your wrist.

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Not long ago, the answer was often as reductive as buying ergonomic keyboards in bulk, but we’ve come a long way in recent years. Policy is one easy way to affect change. Denver-based tech firm Full Contact has a policy called Paid, Paid Vacation, which provides each employee $7,500 per year to spend on a vacation, during which time they are strictly forbidden from working or even checking email. Programs are another effective tactic: Stress challenges, recipe exchanges, yoga classes, and smoking cessation programs are among the more popular offerings.

But programs and policies are only part of the equation. In order to maximize employee wellness, the workplace itself has to be remagined. As Design Director for Gensler, Michelle Liebling has seen a dramatic shift in how her clients approach the issue of employee wellness. “A lot of our clients are looking to the notion of workspaces being a tool to make happy, healthy, engaged workers by understanding who they are and creating a space that authentically speaks to that.”

Liebling points to subtle nudges, rather than heavy-handed mandates, as a big factor in driving change.

One client added standing tables without chairs to engage workers by understanding who they are and creating a space that authentically speaks to that.”

THE NUMBERS

$2,650 The average annual cost to companies (per satisfied employee) from absenteeism.

4.9 The average number of sick days taken each year by all U.S. workers.

2.69 The average number of sick days taken by U.S. workers who feel engaged at work.

6.19 The average number of sick days taken by U.S. workers who feel disengaged at work.

71 The percentage of companies that believe an employee wellness program is an effective way to cut costs.

$521 Estimated annual amount that mid-sized to large employers spend per employee on wellness programs.

THE LEVEL

It’s an increasingly common refrain: Sitting is the new smoking. Even for physically active people, prolonged sitting increases your risk for cancer, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes. Enter: The Level, a sleek, naturally sourced platform that keeps you moving while at a standing desk or in a classroom. And it looks just enough like Marty McFly’s hoverboard to add a dash of cool factor.

TERMS DEFINED

Fibonacci spirals refer to a mathematical sequence that appears with improbably high frequency in nature, from flower petals to snail shells to hurricanes to our own Milky Way galaxy. Also called the Golden Ratio, its proportions can even be traced to the building of Egyptian pyramids and the Parthenon.

Biomimicry is the imitation of models, systems, and elements of nature for the purpose of solving complex human problems. One famous example is Velcro, which mimics naturally occurring hooked structures found in plants and animals. Architects employ biomimicry, too. The Eastgate Centre in Zimbabwe is a mid-rise, mixed-use facility designed using structural techniques gleaned from studying termite mounds. And termite mounds are engineering prodigies.

SITTING: ARE YOU DOING IT WRONG?

Even if you exercise every day, too much sitting is hazardous. Not only that, but unless your boss sprung for an ergonomically advanced suite of office furniture, you’re probably in a near-constant state of bad posture and poor body habits. French designer Benoit Malta can’t help improve your workout routine, but he just might have a solution for that:zuch. Inactis is a tree-legged chair that engages your core and promotes better posture by putting you in a state of “bearable discomfort.” Not recommended for long periods of uninterrupted sitting or use at family holiday gatherings, where “bearable discomfort” already comes standard.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF LUNG

There are a growing number of ways to bring the outside into your office. Gensler’s Michelle Liebling points to emerging practices like biomimicry, geometric patterning, and the strategic use of natural, tactile materials for any surface that might get touched, pushed, or sat upon. But there’s another, more old-fashioned way to incorporate nature into the workplace: plants.

Studies show that even a few basic house plants can help alleviate all sorts of health problems, including headaches, dizziness, nausea, and mental fatigue. Introducing plants to your office may also increase productivity by as much as 15 percent while lowering stress. The process is fairly straightforward: as plants absorb air particulates during their natural process of photosynthesis, even the potting soil contains microbes which can help produce cleaner air for breathing.

But which plants offer the best bang for your buck? Here are four easy-to-find species that will help clean up your office—or anywhere you may find a stagnant air supply.

Bamboo Palm – Give your workspace some vertical definition with a beautiful plant that grows as high as 12 feet under optimal conditions.

Garden Mum – NASA found that this little beauty removes benzene, formaldehyde, and ammonia from indoor air supplies.

Ficus – Hardy and low-maintenance, the Ficus thrives in bright, indirect sunlight.

Aloe Vera – It not only removes pollutants, but the leaves produce a clear liquid packed with vitamins, enzymes, and amino acids.

There’s an aesthetic benefit to bringing the outside indoors, too. Get a richer sense of how beautiful the common plant can be by checking out our photo essay on p. 55.
When Liebling and her Gensler colleagues began work on their new downtown headquarters, they made nudges of their own. They created a wide variety of breakout spaces throughout, putting their employees on laptops and encouraging them to move around and find new perspectives. They added sensors to their lighting system, casting a warm and comfortable glow at 3,500 Kelvin, which automatically dims on a bright day. They focused on acoustics as a way of minimizing noisy distractions, lining the walls with fabric-wrapped, tackable fabric. And they put the elevator around the corner and out of sight while making the stairs the building’s undisputed focal point.

For their trouble, Gensler garnered awards from both AIA and IIDA for their new office, but the real reward has been the anecdotal response from employees, who report better overall health and engagement since the move. Liebling attributes this to an employee-centric approach, and she believes the biggest shifts in workplace design in the coming years will stem from wider acceptance of similar practices. “It’s old news to talk about generations in the workplace, but it’s not old news to talk about work styles in the workplace. An introvert is different than an extrovert, and what does that mean for them in an office environment? That will continue to be more on the forefront and companies will be more interested in designing a space that fits their people, as opposed to their people fitting into a space.”

“A lot of our clients are looking to the notion of the workplace being a tool to make happy, healthy, engaged workers by understanding who they are and creating a space that authentically speaks to that.” -Michelle Liebling, Gensler

When the time came to design new headquarters for their Denver office, international architecture firm Gensler tucked the elevators around a back corner and brought the staircase front and center. Made from oak with custom steel treads, there are 20 lower steps, 15 upper steps, and 10 rows of bleachers. The staircase measures 17 feet across, with cushions strategically placed to encourage breakout work. The seating also hosts a retractable projection screen, which measures 164 inches diagonally (roughly 11’ x 7’).
But in order to see where the most significant changes in healthcare are developing, you have to look beyond the headlines touting space-age O.R. technology and focus instead on less obvious, more practical design choices. Take, for example, nurses stations. Colorado is home to 61,000 licensed nurses, and nearly 60 percent of them work in hospitals. For any given hospital visit, patients spend more time with a nurse than any other hospital staff—and that same nurse is likely responsible for as many as five other patients concurrently, all day long. Tectonic shifts in the healthcare industry brought on by the Affordable Care Act are expected to result in an even greater demand for registered nurses, meaning an even higher nurse-to-doctor ratio. All of which means that when it comes to efficiency, safety, and better patient care overall, a well-designed nurses station is the best place to start. "Hospitals are pretty utilitarian spaces," said Kate Chapman of H+L Architecture. "To do healthcare design, you need to have more than just a marginal idea of how nurses or doctors are working. Those spaces are set up to be functional and streamlined so that the interventions on the patient are as low as possible, but also so that each facility has its own flavor that reflects the patient population they’re serving."

Ask anyone who designs healthcare facilities what the future holds, and they’ll likely answer with some variation on a common refrain: flexibility. H+L Interior Designer Kate Chapman said, "We simply won’t need as much hospital space. We won’t have these monuments to illness, we’ll have ambulatory centers and small outreach centers of wellness. The hospital of the future is one that can evo—It’s an ER now, and in five years it’s an urgent care, and in 10 years maybe it’s an orthopedic clinic. Something more modular, designed so that it can change." With that future in mind, Herman Miller’s Compass line emphasizes "adaptable and functional spaces that can easily navigate change.”

MEDICAL SCIENCE HAS EVOLVED SO RAPIDLY IN THE PAST DECADE THAT IT’S NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO TALK ABOUT NEWLY CONSTRUCTED FACILITIES WITHOUT USING WORDS LIKE “FUTURISTIC” OR “SCIENCE FICTION.” OPERATING ROOMS, IN PARTICULAR, HAVE BEEN GROUND ZERO FOR ADVANCEMENTS THAT INCORPORATE EVERYTHING FROM INDUSTRIAL ROBOTIC TECHNOLOGY TO DIGITAL IMAGING THAT ALLOWS FOR THE KIND OF NON-INVASIVE SURGERIES THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN PURE FANTASY A GENERATION AGO.

ADAPT AND EVOLVE

The merging of healthcare and hospitality has never been more pronounced. Today’s hospitals have to provide more than just great care, they must also give patients and their families a top-notch customer service experience. Along those lines, Steelcase is putting extra emphasis on designing for comfort. This family waiting area (right, top), with crisp lighting, comfortable furniture, and a distinctly modern aesthetic, is a far cry from the cramped seating and dimly lit days past.

Meanwhile, the Empath patient recliner (right, bottom) was designed using more than 2,000 hours of observations between patient and provider, along with direct feedback from more than 300 nurses. What they learned was that patients are often injured while being transferred from chair to bed, and that one in three nurses has sustained an injury during a patient transfer. The Empath was intended to be comfortable, durable, and easy to clean—but also sturdy, adjustable, and with multiple access points. And because sustainability is always a good idea, it’s also up to 90 percent recyclable.

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Chapman just completed interior design work for a free-standing emergency department with UC Health in Fort Collins. Recent trends have called for decentralized nurses stations, which, in theory, allow nurses to be closer to their own patients, their own supply closets, and their own medication rooms. But H+L looked closely at the evidence-based learning and found that rather than simplifying things, this setup generally caused just as many problems as it solved. Collaboration dried up, supplies and medications weren’t always where
they should be, and nurses were doing a lot of impromptu hunting and gathering when they could otherwise be with a patient... which is exactly the kind of thing decentralized stations were supposed to prevent.

Instead, Chapman and her colleagues came up with a large, centralized nurses station in the shape of a horse track. With just one nurse on each side, it’s possible to see every single patient room. On the interior is a large open area for dictation and charting, with adjustable-height tables for doctors and standing-height tables for nurses (who rarely sit). Around the perimeter are 12 additional stations for longer-term charting and better visualization of patients, plus a point-of-care testing station with room for three more people. The end result is an easy-to-access space that comfortably holds upwards of 25 care providers, all of whom can quickly and easily communicate, collaborate, and lend support. It isn’t the most glamorous aspect of the facility, but given that every tiny efficiency adds up to significantly better patient care, shorter wait times, and lower costs for both providers and consumers, it may be the most impactful. Great design, rendered almost invisible.

EMBRACE CHAIR

Few things are more stressful than the premature delivery of a child. Making matters worse is the environment meant to care for these fragile newborns—lots of high-tech equipment, minimal space, and almost no privacy whatsoever. Dutch designer Ricky Kloosterman took all that into account when she came up with EMBRACE, a partially enclosed chair made specifically for mothers to care for their premature babies. The seating area is large enough to fit at least two people comfortably, with dedicated space to hang necessary medical equipment. The rounded form has a tall back to promote skin-to-skin contact between mother and child, and the curved sides are lined with hygienic imitation leather cushions. EMBRACE began as a graduation project for Kloosterman, then a student at Design Academy Eindhoven, and has since shown at Dutch Design Week and garnered multiple award and grant nominations.

+ rickykloosterman.nl

ONCE A PATIENT, NOW A GUEST

Boutique hotels are all the rage, with their custom room designs and intimate sense of hospitality. But how about a boutique healthcare facility? The New Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, England, is exactly that. Its Teenage Cancer Trust Young Persons Unit boasts a study room, movie theater, breakfast bar, daycare facility, and lounge. It’s also designed with an eye toward providing a more comforting palette than the traditional beige-on-beige setting, with bright colors and vibrant imagery. And if that weren’t enough, every bedroom is equipped with laptops, WiFi, gaming facilities, and comfortable furniture.

Closer to home, California’s Cedars-Sinai Medical Center caters to the rich and famous like no other hospital in the world. Thirty-two Super Deluxe Suites on the building’s eighth floor offer meals from a gourmet chef, a personal assistant to satisfy whims and tackle errands, and walls decorated with original works by Picasso. All that luxury comes at a price, however: Private suites start at $1,000 per day. With the shift in healthcare leading to a greater emphasis on customer service, the future will surely bring more comfortable amenities as a basic standard of care. In the meantime, don’t expect to see Girl Before a Mirror adorning the walls of your local hospital any time soon.
SLEEP: NECESSARY, GLORIOUS, AND OFTEN ELUSIVE. ACCORDING TO EVEN THE MOST CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATES, 40 PERCENT OF ADULTS DON’T GET THE RECOMMENDED SEVEN HOURS PER NIGHT—AND EVEN AMONG THOSE WHO DO REACH THAT MAGICAL THRESHOLD, QUANTITY DOESN’T ALWAYS EQUAL QUALITY. AS A RESULT, MILLIONS OF AMERICANS WANDER THROUGH LIFE, ZOMBIE-LIKE, IN A FOG OF DROWSY IRIRABILITY.

Sleep monitors can be helpful, but for the average person they’re generally too expensive, too unwieldy, or both. SevenHugs is a French startup aiming to make sleep monitor technology more accessible. Their hugOne system includes tiny sensors that slide under a mattress cover and track not only your sleeping habits (and the sleeping habits of your entire family), but also provide information on room temperature, humidity control, and air quality. It integrates with your thermostat, controls your lights, and wakes you up at the optimum moment during your sleep cycle.

Whether or not SevenHugs is a panacea for better sleep isn’t really the point. In a larger sense, their efforts are representative of a groundswell in industrial design geared toward developing affordable consumer health products for the masses. And if sleep isn’t an issue in your home, what about dental care? The Kolibree smart sonic toothbrush entices kids to brush their teeth by turning it into a game that syncs with a smartphone. It also tracks specific brushing technique and provides real-time qualitative feedback.

On top of dental care already? How about Vessyl, the high-tech cup (designed by the legendary Yves Behar) that recognizes, tracks, and analyzes virtually any beverage you put inside, with the ultimate goal of improving hydration, regulating caffeine, and reducing sugar intake. Display indicators along the side provide information about your daily consumption, a wireless charger gives the battery five days of life in about an hour, and, as with seemingly every new consumer gadget on the market, the whole thing integrates with your smartphone.

Sleeping, drinking, brushing your teeth—there’s scarcely a sliver of your daily routine, no matter how mundane, that isn’t on the fast track to better living through design technology. The Consumer Electronics Association estimates that by 2018, the “connected health and wellness market” will increase by 342 percent on its way to $8 billion annually. For decades, even as life expectancies have pushed higher and higher, Americans’ overall wellness has trended downward. If there’s a light at the end of that tunnel, it might just be the integrated revolution of everyday things. Bring on the future.