

HOSPITAL DESIGN TRENDS: Reducing patient stress

Patient privacy and tranquility reduce stress and promote healing.

According to Jain Malkin, a founding member of the Center for Health Design's board of directors and an authority on healing environments: *"the environment can influence the healing process."*¹

Recent studies have shown that excessive noise, glare and lack of privacy can create stress in patients of all ages, which significantly impedes the healing process. As more and more studies link the physical environment of hospitals to health outcomes, hospitals are increasingly looking to create more tranquil patient spaces.



More privacy

Spurred on by HIPAA regulations – all aspects of patient privacy have become a driving force in healthcare design. Private spaces and easily adjustable vision control options in patient rooms, nurse's stations and surgical areas give patients a sense of control which significantly decreases stress. Patients need privacy and nurses need adjustable visibility into patient areas in order to monitor them. Louvered glazing that can be controlled from both sides at nursing stations and in patient rooms lets patients and nurses manage visibility as required.

Better control over lighting and glare

There are two types of lighting or glare that can penetrate a patient's space – exterior daylight and interior light from adjacent spaces. For an optimal healing environment it is important to better manage or filter light from any external sources.

There is a direct correlation between patient moods and sunlight. Typically patients in properly sunlit rooms will be less stressed, less depressed and have shorter stays. To avoid uncomfortable glare or solar heat gain, external glazing needs to have adjustable daylight filters. Integrated louvers in exterior windows will allow for flexible control over daylight.

For interior doors and windows, it is essential to be able to control light transmission from hallways or other adjacent rooms into ICUs and patient recovery spaces. Bright lights tend to amplify stress. Louvers within glass are ideal for light filtering or darkening as needed.

Reduced infection risk

Hospitals have traditionally used curtains and blinds for adjustable privacy. The downside of these solutions is the accumulation of dust and dirt, and the need for constant cleaning and maintenance. Infection risk adds stress levels to both patients and medical staff. Louvers that are hermetically sealed between glass dramatically improve hygiene, while offering a maintenance-free vision and daylight control solution.

Reduced noise

To heal properly you need calm and quiet. Studies indicate that excessive noise can induce stress in both adults and babies. Hospitals are increasingly stipulating sound attenuation design features for improved tranquility. Good design approaches reduce noise by employing sound-absorbing floors, ceilings and doors and windows. With increased airspace thicknesses, louvered glazing ensures sound wave barriers to significantly reduce noise and speed up patient recovery.

For more information on how leading hospitals are implementing more stress-free healing environments, read about how:

Baltimore's Mercy Medical Center Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) creates a more stress-free environment for its tiniest patients: <http://tinyurl.com/bof54q8>

Critically ill children benefit from enhanced privacy elements at Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago: <http://tinyurl.com/cclz2l7>

¹ Malkin J. *Healthcare Design Approaches the Millenium. Interior Expressions. November 1998.*

