

Rethinking Long-Term Care Design: Focusing on Well-Being



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25 January 2024*

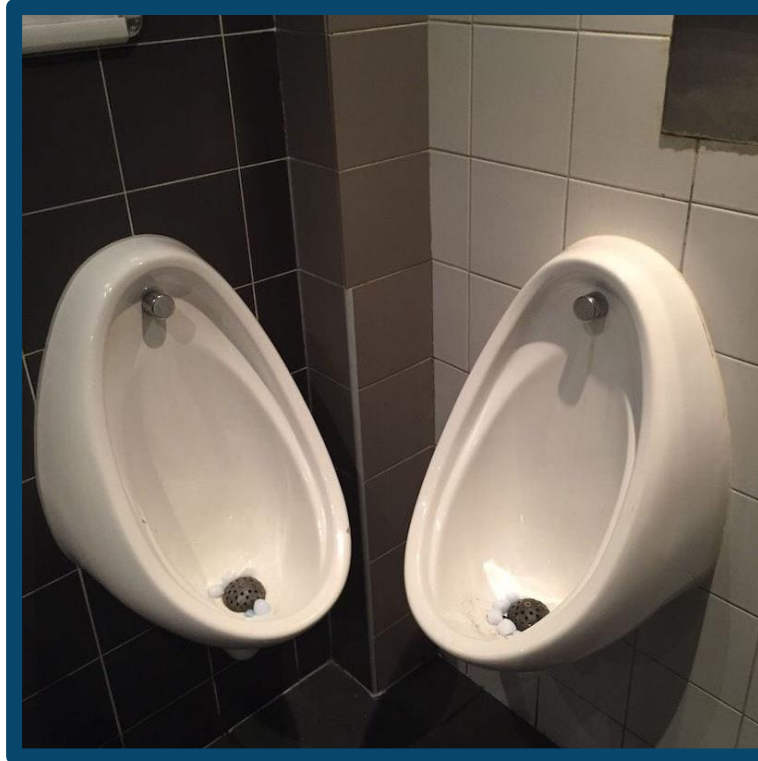
Objective

- It is impossible to provide an extensive discussion of all the concepts involved in this topic
- Instead, I will discuss some general principles around aging and well-being and will show some of the ways in which they challenge conventional design choices.



Disclaimer

- I am *not* an architect
- Most of what I know about design, I have learned from Emi Kiyota, PhD and from my work in helping plan St. John's Penfield Green House homes in Rochester, NY



Evolving Trends in Long-Term Care

- Long-term care populations are increasing frail, and the majority are living with some degree of cognitive change
- This trend is carrying over to assisted living environments as well
- Despite this, people want environments that focus on *living, are enabling and provide meaningful days*
- (There is a larger context as well, in which the increasing ratio of retired to working adults will demand more integrated and community-based solutions in the future—a topic for another talk)



A quick summary of my approach to dementia

1. New definition of dementia
2. Primary focus on well-being
3. Operational and structural shifts to accommodate new approach



One framework for viewing well-being



The Eden Alternative Domains of Well-Being[®],
adapted by Power (2014)



Visualization

Imagine that you experience a sudden, severe illness or injury, and no longer can return home to live. You now need to live out your life in a LTC community...



Questions

- How many neighbors would you like in your living area? 10? 25? 40?
- Would you like to live in a private room or in a room (with toilet) that you will share with a roommate chosen by the organization?
- Would you like to be able to go outside when you wish?
- Would you like to wake up and go to bed when you wish, or on someone else's schedule?
- Would you like the same people helping you with personal care, or a rotating group of people?
- Would you want to be moved to another living area when your abilities change?



If your illness/injury involves a cognitive disability...

- How many different residents/ staff members do you want to have to get to know?
- How many different doors do you want to have to navigate to find your bedroom?
- How far would you want to travel for a meal?
- How large a dining/living area would be comfortable?
- How much ambient noise would you like in the living space?
- Would you like to live/sleep under fluorescent lighting?
- Would you like a space that is adaptable to your own identity, rhythms and needs?
- Would you want to have any input into the layout of the living space, or any renovations made?



A Few Guiding Principles for Well-Being-Based Design

(with memorable quotes from
Emi Kiyota, PhD)



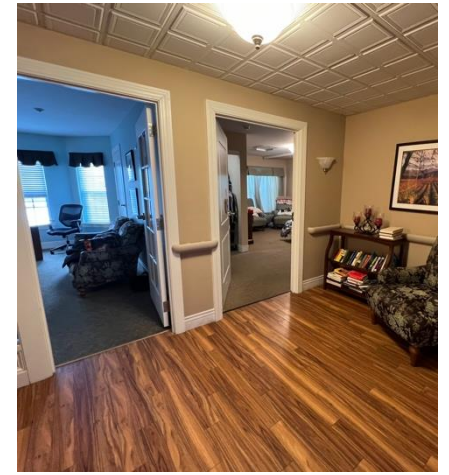
Emi Kiyota quote #1:

“When it comes to a space feeling more or less institutional, size trumps décor.”

Smaller living areas are...

- Easier to navigate (autonomy, security, growth)
- Easier to find what you are looking for (identity, connectedness, security, autonomy)
- Have fewer residents and staff with whom to become familiar (connectedness, security, autonomy)
- Have less ambient noise (connectedness, security)
- Easier to individualize activities (identity, connectedness, meaning)
- Easier to form meaningful relationships (connectedness, meaning, growth and joy)





Examples



Two things we should *never* do again in future designs and renovations!

- Long, double-loaded bedroom corridors
- Multi-bedded rooms

Private rooms provide privacy, dignity, security, autonomy, infection control...and they save lives!

Brown, et al. Association between nursing home crowding and COVID-19 infection and mortality in Ontario, Canada. *JAMA Intern Med* 2021 Feb 1;181(2):229-236. doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.6466.



Emi Kiyota quote #2:

“Good design for dementia is good design for people.”

- Use universal design principles
- Include accommodations for those with limitations, so that a person doesn't have to move to a better-designed area if their abilities change
- Remember also that environmental factors that fuel both well-being and distress in people with dementia are largely the same factors that do so in people *without* the condition

Examples



Emi Kiyota quotes #3&4:

“Write the play before designing the stage.”

“A building is like a glove and the operations and activities of daily life are the hand that moves the glove. The glove must fit the hand.”

- Form follows function (and that includes challenging which “functions” we wish to follow!)
- Imagine and plot the desired rhythms of daily life and work, and then translate this to design, rather than creating a shell to squeeze the residents and staff into
- *Renovations should involve consultation with those who will live and work there!*



Example: RIA Environmental Guide

<https://the-ria.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Supporting-comfort-and-belonging-for-people-living-with-dementia-RIA-Resource-FNL-2.pdf>

- Follows a more enlightened view of dementia
- To be used by staff and residents, not just architects and leaders
- Looks not just at physical features, **but also operational, interpersonal, sensory changes, well-being domains, etc.**
- Can be used to look at the living area for all, **or** to investigate one individual person's distress
- Can be broken into sections for huddles etc.; includes action planning sections



Laura Aguiar MA-Sc, MPH

Guide evaluation—March 2020

- “Hagey”: A dementia-specific LTC neighbourhood of the Village at University Gates (32 residents)
- A total of 3 hours of engagement, with various team members and at various times of day
- A total of 53 recommendations were made from the evaluation
 - 26 low-cost/low-impact suggestions
 - 21 medium-cost/impact suggestions
 - 6 high-cost/impact suggestions

Examples of suggestions (for “Lighting” section)

Low cost/effort

- Dimmer switches for various lights to adjust lighting levels
- Table lamps in common use areas to allow overhead fluorescent lights to be turned down or off
- Use lighting in quiet areas such as the country kitchen or parlour that is designed to encourage visitation
- Enhance washroom contrast with colored toilet seats and other fixtures
- Individualize lighting to each person’s preference for sleep and nighttime assistance
- Keep common room lighting low at night if not being used by residents
- Turn off laundry/utility lights when not in use, or use sensors



Examples of suggestions (for “Lighting” section, cont.)

Medium cost/effort

- Connect bedroom light switch to a table lamp rather than overhead light
- Find curtains that are solid on top in double rooms to prevent light leakage
- Install softer/incandescent lighting for use in tub rooms

High cost/effort

- Redo lighting to eliminate overhead fluorescents in bedrooms and elsewhere as able



Comments (continued)

End of hallway:

- “So, you're down by three locked doors. You don't know where to go...”
- “So, you can see why people get stuck. They have this door they have that door. They have this thing, it’s a storage [one interjects, “and they’re all locked”] and all the flooring has changed. It also feels kind of ‘live’ here [i.e., ‘echo-y’] sound-wise.”
- “Imagine being here, being stuck here. . . .”
- “And then looking down there and having no idea where your room is . . .”
- “Yeah, ‘cause they’ve been searching for maybe a rest, perhaps looking for a bathroom, and thinking, ‘This must be one’.”

Comments (continued)

Miscues:

- “So here we're walking straight toward this wide-open space and there's a big field and lots of sunshine coming in . . .”
- “And then you smell it.”
- “It’s amazing how many men will just gravitate to this space because it's a field. It's open, the flooring, there's a drain—like it's just it's so funny.”

Design flaws

- “So just one thing—this is big. But we've had a couple of people that are in wheelchairs and their wheelchairs get stuck on this railing.”



You can also do cost-effective “re-design” with operational shifts!!



- Dedicated staff assignments – increased familiarity and knowledge, helps residents navigate and feel calm, and helps team members understand needs
- Versatile workers decrease the number of people in the environment
- Resident engagement and input into daily life and routines creates increased meaning within the space
- Respecting boundaries improves a sense of security
- Don't set dining tables for meals until mealtime
- Avoid commotion at change of shift!!

Emi Kiyota quotes #5&6:

“Embrace imperfection gracefully.”

“If you design a perfect, finished space, you have created an institution.”

- Design spaces with the potential for the rhythms of daily life to influence the layout and use of various spaces
- Promote flexibility over rigid tasks and routines
- Think of multiple uses for a given space throughout the day
- Don't over-program spaces
- Avoid fake engagement (1950s neighborhoods, fake bus stops, fake bookshelf murals over doors, etc.)
- Getting resident/staff input into design and use of spaces increases one's sense of agency and purpose



Examples



Final quote:

“Community is something that must be actively negotiated and created with others, not something that can be passively received.” – Emi Kiyota



Thank you!

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[Emi Kiyota's nonprofit:](#)
[www,ibasho.net](http://www.ibasho.net)

