



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

To assess how a redesigned consultation room impacts patient-physician interactions in an outpatient setting.

Effects of Revised Consultation Room Design on Patient-Physician Communication

Ajiboye, F., Dong, F., Moore, J., Kallail, K. J., Baughman, A., 2015 | *HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal*. Volume 8, Issue 2, Pages 8-17

Key Concepts/Context

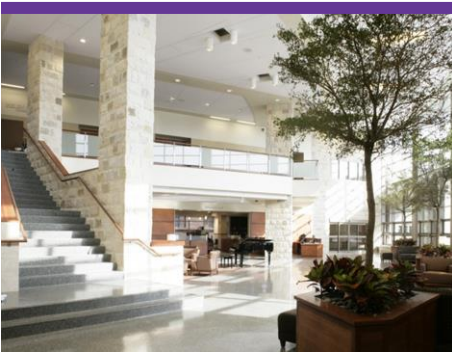
As use of healthcare facilities increases across the United States, outpatient facilities have become a primary treatment environment for many patients. Despite this growth in usage and a host of technological advancements, the common design of outpatient examination rooms has remained mostly static since World War II. Furthermore, there is a lack of research examining how clinical space designs impact outpatient care, especially since technological innovations such as laptops have become embedded in the daily routines of caregivers.

Methods

The study involved a randomized controlled trial carried out over the fall season of 2013. In the study, 59 patients successfully completed surveys after receiving outpatient treatment in either a “traditionally” designed space or an experimental space (the intervention). Physicians were placed in either room based on a schedule of randomized patients they received for the purpose of this study. In the traditional space, the physician had to hold their laptop in their lap while the patient sat on an examination table. In the experimental space, both the physician and the patient had equal access to the laptop, which sat on a pedestal.

Findings

Survey results showed that the experimental outpatient room granted patients greater access to the laptop screen, thereby enhancing their sense of interpersonal interaction with the treatment process. Variables such as overall satisfaction with treatment, trust with the physician, people-room interaction, and mutual respect did vary between the two spaces. The results reinforce the idea that modifying



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outpatient rooms to increase patient visibility of the laptop screen can improve the patient's sense of interpersonal-room interaction during treatment.

Limitations

The authors note that this study had a relatively small number of participants and took place in a relatively short time period. The fact that it was conducted in an academic clinic may restrict the generalizability of the results. Socioeconomic information about patients was not gathered.

Design Implications

Designing outpatient treatment rooms to make the physician's laptop screen visible to the patient can help improve the patient's sense of interpersonal-room interactions. As computers are used more and more within outpatient treatment rooms, considering the location of the laptop in relation to patients and physicians could help lead to improvements in modern outpatient experiences.

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