KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

To assess which design features in hospital rooms are valued by inpatients.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Positive distractions for inpatients improve their experiences within healthcare environments. Providing access to television and other media, as well as window views, can drastically improve the inpatient experience. As designers may not always have control over the size of patient rooms, they can focus on the overall ambiance of inpatient spaces, providing furniture and other materials that enhance the functionality and aesthetic appeal of the rooms. Designs that promote patient privacy are also popular among the participants in this study.

Qualities of Inpatient Hospital Rooms: Patients' Perspectives

Devlin, A. S., Andrade, C. C., & Carvalho, D. 2016 | *HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal*. Volume 9, Issue 3, Pages 190-211
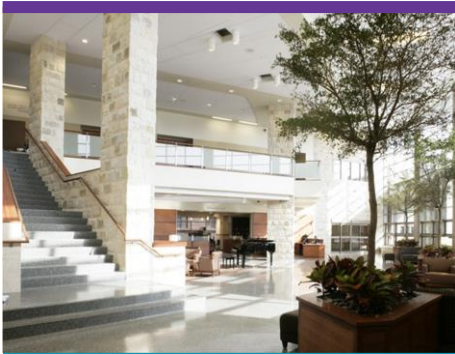
Key Concepts/Context

Previous studies suggest that healthcare environments can promote patient well-being if they are designed to do three things: 1) give patients a sense of control over their social and physical surroundings, 2) provide patients with access to social support, and 3) provide patients with access to positive distractions. While other previous studies have examined the validity of these factors in a number of different ways, there is a lack of research exploring the prominence of these three factors in the opinions of patients themselves. A qualitative approach to finding out what patients themselves value in healthcare environments could reveal previously unexplored factors.

Methods

A total of five orthopedic units were involved in this study, two in the USA and three in Portugal. Each unit featured different physical and spatial conditions. The authors gathered detailed notes on the physical and spatial features of each orthopedic unit, including size (in square feet), bed counts, decoration styles, the presence of amenities, and patient access to lavatories and showers. 236 patients (33.1% American and 66.9% Portuguese) ranging from 19 to 87 years responded to a survey. They were asked to list three characteristics from their inpatient rooms that affected degrees of satisfaction with their overall hospital experience. Data were analyzed to create categories of valuable characteristics.

Findings

245 items within the participants' survey responses fell into the aforementioned categories of 1) perceived control (22.4%), 2) social support (6%), and 3) positive distraction (33.2%). All responses that did not fit into these categories were classified as "other aspects" (35.7%), while "Internet" also received its own category. All responses were assessed for being either positive or negative in nature,

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ultimately revealing that aspects of the physical environment can produce either satisfaction or dissatisfaction in patients. TV and other media garnered the most responses in the "positive distraction" category, while window views followed closely behind and had the largest amount of positive responses, proportionally speaking. The "perceived control" garnered the most comments, with most patients placing positive value on privacy.

Limitations

This study uses qualitative data to assess how the physical environment impacts the satisfaction and well-being of patients; no quantitative data are gathered to show improvements or detriments in patient actual patient health over time in these environments. The study also focuses on healthcare environments that are relatively modern and technologically advanced; therefore many of the implications may not be applicable to some healthcare environments.