



## KEY POINT SUMMARY

### OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study was to determine the effect of changes in servicescape on patient perception of the service quality in the maternity wards of two hospitals in Johannesburg, South Africa.

## The effect of changes in servicescape and service quality perceptions in a maternity unit

Holder, M., & Berndt, A. 2011 | *International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance*. Volume 24, Issue 5, Pages 389-405

### Key Concepts/Context

Quality of service in healthcare is pertinent to patient experience and satisfaction, and can impact customer (patient) loyalty, cost savings, profits and market share of the healthcare facility. The authors indicate that the servicescape, or the physical environment of a facility, has an impact on a patient's perception of the quality of service. The study surveyed two groups of patients in the maternity wards of two hospitals (one underwent redecoration) pre- and post-change to determine if changes in the servicescape impact patient perception of service quality.

### Methods

Two groups of patients were surveyed before and two groups were surveyed after the changes were made in the servicescape of one hospital. The sample consisted of 30 pregnant women who had been admitted for an elective caesarean section in a four-month period in two similar maternity units. Patients in the hospital that was redecorated were used as the experimental group, while those in the other hospital were used as the control group. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

### Findings

The respondents in the four groups (2 control [pre- and post- change]) and 2 experimental [pre- and post-change]) had a similar demographic profile (in terms of age and medical procedures undergone).

There was little change in the mean perception of the servicescape by the control group. In the experimental group there was a large change in the patient perception of the servicescape after changes were made to the physical environment.



Perception of all five aspects of service quality decreased among the control group ( $p=0.776$ ), whereas in the experimental group there was an increase in all aspects, notably the tangibles (physical environment) ( $p=0.001$ ).

With regard to the physical environment, the patients rated the changed (redecorated) environment higher in terms of:

- Visual appeal
- Adequate seating at bedside
- Clear signage
- Clean bathrooms and corridors
- Acceptable noise levels
- Attractive décor
- Window and door curtains complementing the décor
- Attractive artwork on walls
- Appropriate furniture

The artwork on the walls got the highest rating as compared to all other changes. From the above findings the authors concluded that changes in the physical environment can impact patient perception of service quality.

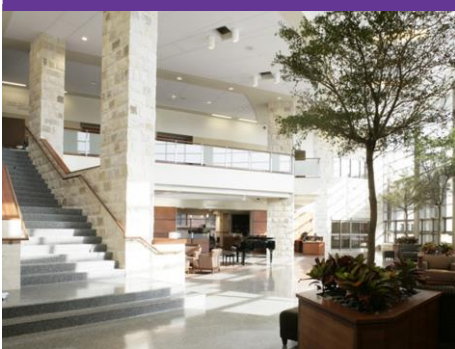
### Limitations

The authors listed the limitations of this study as follows:

- The study took place in a private hospital where the patient profile is different from those who go to public hospitals.
- Patients in the private hospital have the ability to choose their service, whereas patients in public hospitals have little or no choice.
- The nature of the procedure the patients underwent (elective, planned cesarean section) may have affected the perceptions of the patients.
- Respondents were different because of the four-month-long study period.

The other limitations of this study:

- The article does not describe the physical environment of the hospital with the experimental group prior to the changes, or that of the hospital with the control group.



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- The article mentions that changes in the physical environment involved changes to the curtains, duvet, artwork and paint, but there is no description of these changes.
- The sample was not adequately described to distinguish between the four groups.

### Design Implications

When designing maternity wards, it may be noted that patients perceive the following features to be reflective of the quality of service:

- Visually appealing wards are those with
  - Artwork on the walls
  - Windows and door curtains to complement the décor of the ward
  - Attractive decor
- Furniture
  - Adequate seating at bedside
  - Appropriate furniture
- Clear signage
- Acceptable noise levels

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