



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

This research sought to investigate the effect of displaying artwork -- a pictorial intervention -- within a pediatric unit on parents' perception of the hospital environment.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

This research suggests that utilizing art as a way to humanize the environment within a pediatric inpatient setting can be beneficial to creating a positive perception of the hospital environment for parents. Attention within the planning phase should be given to areas where art can be displayed to have maximum impact within the built environment.

Pictorial Intervention in a Pediatric Hospital Environment: Effects on Parental Affective Perception of the Unit

Monti, F., Dellabartola, S., Neri, E., Bozicevic, L., Pocecco, M., Agostini, F.
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Key Concepts/Context

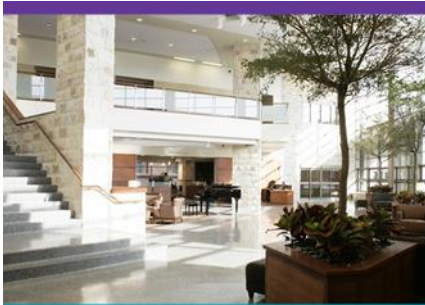
Prior research has shown that the physical, emotional, and social health of a parent, during the course of their child's hospitalization, directly affects the health and well-being of their child.

Methods

This study was conducted in three phases, and participants for this study comprised of a random sampling of 502 parents of children hospitalized for both acute and chronic conditions. This first phase, conducted from December 2004-October 2005, consisted of 200 parents that were recruited before the pictorial intervention. This group represented the control, had children in the hospital for acute and chronic conditions, and it was the first time they had visited the hospital. The control group viewed spaces within the pediatric unit that utilized small, simple images to display art.

The second phase, conducted from December 2005-October 2006, consisted of 200 parents recruited after the pictorial intervention of a large, painted mural consisting of a natural landscape with cartoon characters. This group represented the experimental condition A, had children in the hospital for acute and chronic conditions, and it was the first time they had visited the hospital.

The third phase, conducted from December 2005-October 2006, consisted of 102 parents recruited after the pictorial intervention of a large, painted mural consisting of a natural landscape with cartoon characters. This group represented the



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experimental condition B, had children in the hospital for chronic conditions, and it was the first time they had visited the hospital.

Parents were asked to remain in the area where the pictorial intervention was taking place for five minutes. Following their observation time, participants filled out the Italian version of the Scale of the Affective Quality Attributed to Place (QAL). Parents were then asked to fill out a demographics form. Data was analyzed using SSPS for Windows version 17.0 to investigate the homogeneity of the three conditions as they-related to the demographic variables. Then QAL scores were explored in relation to the parents' age and gender. Finally, all three conditions were compared to validate the research hypothesis.

Findings

No significant differences were reported between the three groups with regard to child's and parent's age, child's and parent's gender, and length of stay. Results correlating the QAL to the three groups showed significant difference among the three groups within all of the positive scales (Relaxing, Exciting, Pleasant, Arousing), with groups A and B reporting significantly higher scores than the control group. Significant differences were also seen within the negative scales (Distressing, Gloomy, Unpleasant, Sleepy), with groups A and B reporting lower scores than the control group. A significant difference was also seen in relation to the QAL and the severity of the child's illness between groups A and B for the Exciting scale. Parents of children with an acute illness reported higher levels compared to parents of children with a chronic illness. In respect to the QAL and the child's age, three scales reported significant differences. Relaxing, Exciting, and Pleasant were significantly higher for parents of children between the ages of six and 11 than parents with children between the ages of zero and five. When looking at the difference between the groups in relation the child's age, statistical significance was found within the Exciting and Arousal scales. Parents with children between the ages of six and 11 within the control group reported a more positive perception of the environment than those of younger children. No significant differences were found in regards to the child's age within groups A and B.

Limitations

While this study did look at the parental perception of the hospital environment pre- and post- pictorial intervention, it did not take into account the content of the imagery used in the mural or the size of the mural when assessing its impact on parental perception of the environment. Also, this study did not focus on the effect of first-time exposure compared to repeated exposure. The relationship to the intervention and its impact on parent and child health outcomes were also not explored.