



## KEY POINT SUMMARY

### OBJECTIVES

The objective of the study was to demonstrate the holistic approach of a multi-channel system of wayfinding improvements through participatory design approach methods and prototyping at the hospital facility and explore how communication design could be employed to enhance the user's experience.

## Wayfinding for health seeking: Exploring how hospital wayfinding can employ communication design to improve the outpatient experience

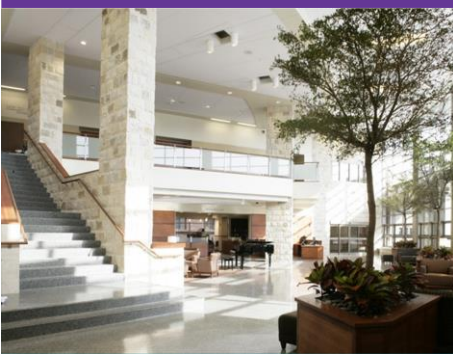
Short, Eden Jayne, Reay, S., Gilderdale, P., 2017 | *The Design Journal*. Volume 20, Issue sup1, Pages S2551-S2568

### Key Concepts/Context

Hospital spaces have the ability to provide physical and emotional well-being. However, the journey through health systems is becoming stressful. The ease of wayfinding has an important role to play, as it reduces anxiety and enhances the experience of the facilities users visit. This paper is an exploration of how visual communication design enhanced the wayfinding experience in a New Zealand hospital.

### Methods

A children's outpatient department was chosen to test and evaluate prototypes, as it was scheduled for renovation. A participatory framework was developed to involve stakeholders including hospital staff and patients. Observations and photo documentation investigating end-to-end services outlined the user's pathway to and through the department. Additionally, role playing was used to create journey maps, and interviews were conducted with the hospital staff to collect information on context, journey through the space, and problems encountered. Graphics were later developed to show the whole journey through the department. The concept of place making was applied to make prototypes of communication materials (print and environmental) that were tested by patients and hospital staff through role plays, surveys, and workshops. An experience map was produced with wayfinding tasks and the data collected was analyzed against the journey path. As a result, actual environmental graphics were installed to lead to the children's department and make it more visible. At the end, a survey was done to evaluate the satisfaction of the final design.



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## Findings

Prototypes for testing design solutions were very effective in pointing out problem areas that needed to be addressed beyond signage. A conflict appeared to exist between wayfinding using visual cues and hospital space planning for functional efficiency. A holistic approach (print and built environment channels) must be taken to improve wayfinding by taking into consideration the patient's overall hospital experience. Environmental graphic design provides a tool to better serve the needs of hospital staff and patients to save wayfinding time and increase efficiency. The participatory design process succeeded in translating the views of the stakeholders into an actual design and should continue to be the basis of future wayfinding solutions.

## Limitations

The visual communication system designed for the study was difficult to test for consistency because it was limited to an isolated component in one department at the hospital amidst an existing set of dominant and complex physical conditions. The patient/parent surveys were ineffective due to low response rates. Furthermore, the prototypes developed were site specific and could not be generalized.

## Design Implications

The final design solution included appointment letters, signage, and place-making that focused on the first-time visitor in order to reduce anxiety of the health seeker, in this case a child-supporting member of the family. The goal was to optimize the information given prior to arrival and present it in a clear format to establish expectation before and during the visit. A place-making approach was used to create a cohesive prototype design across all collateral material using the same visual cues from pre-visit material to large signage which were found to be effective. In addition, the repetition of the same communication language and graphics along the route and on pamphlets were helpful.

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