



## KEY POINT SUMMARY

### OBJECTIVES

This research was commissioned to explore hospital environments from a child's perspective, so that the new Children's Hospital of Ireland could design the physical and social spaces within their new facility to respond to the needs of children and families they serve.

### DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

This research suggests that pediatric hospital environments would benefit from using a child-centric approach during the design and planning a new facility.

## Young Children's Perspectives of Ideal Physical Design Features for Hospital-Built Environments

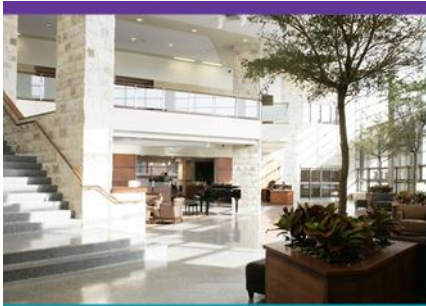
Lambert, V., Coad, J., Hicks, P., Glacken, M.  
 2014 | *Journal of Child Healthcare*  
 Volume 18, Issue 1, Pages 57-71

### Key Concepts/Context

Current research has sought to understand pediatric hospital environments through studies designed to gain insight into the hospital experience from a child's perspective. While this research has provided insight into a child's emotional response to being in a hospital environment, little has been done to gain insight into the physical design from a child's perspective.

### Methods

Semi-structured interviews, using arts and crafts and drawings to direct discussion and encourage interaction, were conducted with 55 children. The participants represented both genders between the ages of five and eight with various ethnic backgrounds and health conditions ranging in acuity. One-on-one interviews were conducted beside the bed within the open ward for 46 participants. Nine of the children participated in workshops that were held within the play areas of two hospitals. Children were asked to design their ideal hospital environment through drawings and color, using the art supplies provided. Sixteen of the participants chose not to utilize the art materials due to their illness; however, these children provided verbal narration of what their art project would look like. Upon completion of each child's art project, the child narrated their individual project utilizing a pre-approved discussion guide. Immediately following each encounter, electronic field notes were composed. The workshops were also digitally recorded. All data was thematically coded for emerging themes and patterns using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step guide.



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## Findings

From this study, three broad themes regarding the physical space within a hospital emerged: (1) Physical environment, (2) Access, (3) Personal space. Within each theme, organizing themes were identified. The physical environment encompassed the children's desire for creative use of space, imaginative décor, and bringing the outdoors in through easy access to nature. The theme of access was comprised of the children's need for positive first impressions that included child- and family-centric waiting spaces, easy orientation within the facility, and open spaces to facilitate movement. Personal space incorporated themes pertaining to the desire for individual and family space within the rooms, and a need for privacy and child-friendly storage options.

## Limitations

While the participants were given an appropriate medium to express their ideas, the study was conducted while the children were in the hospital environment. This could have impeded the child's ability to think beyond the environment. Also, the selection of art supplies provided could have limited the children's ability to translate ideas into visual representations. This study focused specifically on children between the ages of five and eight, leaving a significant portion of the pediatric population outside the parameter of these findings. Further research using similar techniques with other age ranges within the pediatric population would increase the significance of these findings.