



Patient-Centered Design Online™

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Research Fund

The Institute for Patient-Centered Design, Inc. seeks to partner with academic research projects that inform the patient-centered design process. Full or partial sponsors of research projects will be acknowledged in the Institute's published research report.

Patient Toolkits

As a courtesy to patients who participate in research studies and surveys, we offer complimentary tools. Kits may include promotional items, such as pens, notebooks or journals for recording patient history/experience, bags for packing personal items for a hospital stay, water bottles, etc. If your organization is interested in providing helpful items that may be offered to patients, or a monetary donation to purchase such items, please visit

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Family-Centered Care and Health Facility Design: A Partnership for Successful Patient Recovery

Written By: Elizabeth S. Jones and T. S. Thompson

Having a family member or close friend to accompany patients during a hospital stay may prove to be quite beneficial. These individuals may serve as a support system for patients undergoing medical treatment. They serve as a second set of ears during a diagnosis. They may also play a major role in a patient's recovery. Healthcare facilities that support this concept refer to it as "Family-Centered Care."

Family-Centered Care is not a new concept, but it has taken a stronger presence in recent years. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop recognized this program on a national level while serving under President Reagan (1982 – 1989). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Dr. Koop, a pediatric surgeon, encouraged families and healthcare professionals involved in the treatment of children with special healthcare needs to "work together to improve the lives of these children and their families through a system of family-centered, community-based, coordinated care (Brewer, Jr., 2010)."

Pediatrics, the journal of the AAP defines family-centered care as the "philosophy of care in which the pivotal role of the family is recognized and respected in the lives of children with special health needs (Brewer, Jr., 2010)." Since the early 1990's, a number of healthcare organizations have expanded the concept of family-centered care beyond the treatment of children to cover persons of all ages.

The Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care, a non-profit organization founded in 1992 explains that "as patients [mature], they should be encouraged to become more involved as decision-makers in their healthcare (Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care, 2010)." As a result, in recent years this organization has become more focused on the needs of adult patients as well. The Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care recognizes that patients need a supportive environment in order to comfortably recover from illness. Their website explains that "individuals, who are most dependent on hospital care and the

broader healthcare system, are often dependent on families and other support networks (Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care, 2010)." In other words, human interaction - more specifically patient-to-family interaction creates a positive, healing environment.

Planetree is an organization focused on patient-centered healthcare. It was founded in 1978 by a patient, whose hospital experience inspired her advocacy for this philosophy of care. As a patient, Planetree's founder Angelica Thieriot was "disheartened to find that [a] lack of personalized care threatened to overshadow the benefits of the hospital's high-tech environment (Planetree, 2010)." According to Jain Malkin in her book, *A Visual Reference for Evidence-Based Design*, "The Planetree movement in the early 1980s boldly asserted that family should participate in care because it provides emotional support for the patient and makes the transition to home care more successful...Family members can provide much-needed information that will help in clinical decision making. After all, they know the patient much better than the staff does (Malkin, 2008, p. 89)."

Today, Planetree is recognized as an authority on patient-centered care because of their mission to educate and inform patients and healthcare organizations on the importance of patient-centered care. This organization offers numerous resources for improving patient care, many of which are available on their website, www.planetree.org.

The Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care recognizes hospitals around the nation for making a difference in patients' lives by creating facilities focused on family-centered care. Many of the listed hospitals have redesigned waiting rooms, family visitation areas and patient rooms in order to create an environment that focuses on the patient and his or her family support system. Other hospitals are recognized for providing special services such as private suites with space for families to stay with newborns. The Evergreen Hospital Medical Center in Kirkland, Washington designed family gathering spaces; including atriums, play areas, a

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reflection room, family lounges, and even a classroom with family movie evenings. (Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care, 2010). These recognitions may be found under the *Profiles of Change* heading on the website, www.familycenteredcare.org.

Some healthcare facilities with previously-established patient and family-centered care departments have since moved away from fixed programs because the focus on patients and families has become a part of the hospital's philosophy. A representative from the Patient Information and Social Services Department at Northside Hospital in Atlanta explains that extended visitation hours and family friendly areas throughout the hospital are part of the environment at Northside. (Telephone interview, Dasher, June 11, 2010).

Palmetto Health in Columbia, SC is another example of a hospital system that focuses on patients without a fixed program. "A patient and family focused environment has always been present in the Palmetto Health Columbia Heart Hospital," explains Regina Brown, Public Relations representative for Palmetto Health. (Telephone interview, Brown, June 29, 2010). Other hospitals in the Palmetto Health system have also made considerable improvements to accommodate the patient through improved patient care, as well as family-friendly patient rooms, consultation rooms and waiting areas. Brown added that Palmetto Health has a "Patient Relations" department that handles all patient concerns.

These examples of improved family-centered care not only put the patient at ease, but allow the family to be active in the recovery process. In fact, "patients are often calmer and demonstrate decreases in blood pressure, pulse and intracranial pressure with family visits (Hardin & Kaplow, 2005)." In addition, according to the Joint Commission, family participation in patient care may reduce medical error. In its publication, *Patients as Partners: How to involve patients and families in their own care*, methods are listed for inviting families to take an active role in the care of patients by asking "questions, especially when they are concerned that an error is about to be (or may have been) made (McGreevey, 2006, p. 15)."

Sonya R. Hardin and Roberta Kaplow, healthcare providers and authors of *Critical Care Nursing: Synergy for Optimal Outcomes*, explain that, "Family-focused care takes patient care to the next level. This approach considers patient needs to be a priority ... and helps the family continue to support the patient as part of the family system (Hardin & Kaplow, 2005)."

Facility design is essential to patient and family-centered care. Provisions for "access to telephones, visiting areas for family with seating in privacy groupings, [and] play space for children" are amenities that have been noted to contribute to the well-being of patient-family dyads.

Other ideas include a "variation in seating to accommodate a wide range of users, overnight accommodations, private grieving space, [and] family amenities (shower, kitchen, vending machines) (Malkin, 2008, p. 87)." Some healthcare facilities strive to incorporate "evidence-based design" in their new or renovated facilities. Designers who follow this concept utilize findings from medical and design research to create healthcare spaces. The responsible designer is continuously investigating ways in which the health environment may promote optimal patient outcomes. Considering the numerous benefits of family involvement in the care of patients, facility design should accommodate these individuals and provide amenities that enable them to remain with patients throughout their treatment, if possible.

Patients and families who take an active role in their healthcare enable providers to better equip them for a healthy recovery. For more information on how patients and families may contribute to the design of healthcare facilities, please visit www.patientcentereddesign.org.

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Elizabeth S. Jones may be reached at
Institute for Patient-Centered Design, Inc.
ejones@patientcentereddesign.org

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Calendar of Events

July 6, 2010

AIA Academy of Architecture for Health (AAH)

Healthcare 101: Successful Programming

Online

<http://www.aia.org/practicing/groups/kc/AIAS074687>

July 20, 2010

Organizational Meeting of an AAH

Knowledge Community

Atlanta, Georgia

<http://www.aiaatlanta.org/cde.cfm?event=316509>

September 21, 2010

Putting Patients First Webinar Series by American

Journal of Nursing (AJN), Planetree, Picker Institute

Ensuring Quieter Healing Environments

Online

www.ajnonline.com

September 27-29, 2010

Better Care, Better Health: Delivering on Quality for All

Americans AHRO's 2010 Annual Conference

Bethesda, Maryland

<http://www.ahrq.gov/about/annlconf10.htm>

October 5-8, 2010

2010 Planetree Annual Conference

Denver, Colorado

<http://www.planetree.org/>

November 1-4, 2010

Hospitals and Communities Moving Forward with

Patient- and Family-Centered Care Intensive Training Seminar

Pinehurst, North Carolina

<http://www.ipfcc.org/events/seminars.html>

November 13-16, 2010

Healthcare Design 2010

Las Vegas, Nevada

www.hcd10.com

As a courtesy to our readers, we have listed information about upcoming events and links to related websites for more details. This does not constitute a relationship between the Institute for Patient-Centered Design and any of the websites or events listed. Nor does this represent an endorsement or guarantee of any kind. While we strive to keep such information updated, we make no legal or otherwise binding commitment to do so. We do not guarantee any of the information on the websites listed. Nor do we guarantee the events.

Letter from a Patient

Each month, we feature a letter from a patient addressing a specific need identified during his or her hospital stay. Patients are encouraged to write letters to communicate their concerns to the designers and operators of healthcare facilities. To submit a letter, visit www.patientcentereddesign.org/perspectives.



*Dear Institute for Patient-Centered Design,
My local hospital recently opened a replacement facility. The new building is much nicer than the old one. I've noticed that there are many more sinks in this new facility. Just out of curiosity, is there a new rule that requires more sinks in hospitals now? It seems like a waste to me.
-Anonymous*

Dear Patient,
Thank you for your letter. Without knowing the age or location of the facility that you mentioned, the general response to your question is yes. Many states have adopted the *Guidelines for Design and Construction of Health Care Facilities* as part of their building code for hospital construction. This document states the required minimum number of sinks in various patient care areas. In general, a sink is required in each inpatient room as well as in the adjoining bathroom. In addition, sinks are typically required to be located at a ratio of 1 sink for every 4 patients in an open patient care space. This may vary depending on the department; so, the *Guidelines* should be consulted for specific information.

From a clinical standpoint, research studies suggest that the most important method for preventing hospital infection is hand washing. Sinks are located throughout patient care areas to allow caregivers convenient access to hand washing prior to each patient interaction. Although it may seem like a waste, this increase in sinks is actually a positive measure. Not only does it contribute to infection control in hospitals, it also saves money associated with the treatment of infections and more importantly, it has the potential to save lives.

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