



Patient-Centered Design Online™

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Current Projects

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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

www.patientcentereddesign.org

The Joint Commission: A Valuable Resource for Patients, Designers and Health Care Facilities

Written by: Elizabeth S. Jones, Institute for Patient-Centered Design, Inc.

A hospital visit could possibly be one of the most frightening experiences in a person's life. Whether undergoing major surgery or simply having a cosmetic flaw corrected, one of the last things on a patient's mind may be hospital safety standards. *Does the hospital insure that all utility rooms are locked? Are the emergency call buttons working in the patient's room? Are food and beverage storage facilities at the correct temperature?* These questions may not be at the forefront of a patient's mind however, they are just a few of the number of standards that must be met in order to maintain accreditation by The Joint Commission, the independent organization that provides accreditation and certification for health care facilities across the United States.

While some patients may not be aware of the benefits of The Joint Commission, the average health care professional quickly perks up with any mention of the organization. Many designers are also familiar with The Joint Commission. At a minimum, designers understand that their clients strive to comply with The Joint Commission's standards. Proactive designers are constantly seeking methods of improving healthcare design by utilizing the safety goals and other standards as a guide for designing healthcare facilities. A designer plays a key role in contributing to the success of a fully accredited healthcare facility.

Since 1951, The Joint Commission has been an independent organization whose purpose is to provide voluntary accreditation for healthcare facilities. "The Joint Commission has accredited about 84% of United States hospitals, which accounts for nearly 94% of hospital beds across the country," according to Ken Powers, spokesperson for The Joint Commission. Though the accreditation process is not mandatory, a number of healthcare payers such as Medicare and Medicaid look to the Joint Commission as a deeming authority. Powers notes that "The Joint

Commission is highly recognized because the accreditation process is based on several hundred standards that health care facilities must meet, including infection prevention and control, as well as the physical safety of the facility (telephone interview, Powers, May 27, 2010)."

It is important for patients to know about the Joint Commission because the organization was established with the patient in mind. In 1910, Dr. Ernest Codman established the "end result system" for tracking patient outcomes after hospital treatment. His system is one of the first on record and is still being used by hospitals today (The Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 2010). This form of record keeping later became a part of the hospital standards set by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and is still prominently used by The Joint Commission.

The Joint Commission is primarily concerned about patient health and safety. An accredited health care facility strives to create a healthy environment for patient treatment and recovery. Therefore, nearly half of the standards used in the accreditation process are related to patient safety. The Joint Commission believes in reducing the risk of negative healthcare outcomes.

The organization has established a *Sentinel Event Alert* system. A sentinel event occurs when an unexpected death, serious physical injury, or psychological injury occurs as a result of health care treatment. According to The Joint Commission, this alert system "identifies specific sentinel events, describes their common underlying causes, and suggests steps to prevent occurrences in the future (The Joint Commission, 2010)." When a sentinel event occurs, The Joint Commission accredited health care organization must analyze the issue causing the event, and make considerable improvements.

Collaboration Program

Become a collaborator with the Institute for Patient-Centered Design, Inc. and stay informed of the latest information that we have available.

Patient Collaborator (No Cost) Available to Patients and Patient Advocates

- Subscription to *Patient-Centered Design Online™*, electronic newsletter
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- Invitation to participate in user surveys, test groups, and provide feedback.
- Free patient-readiness kit (while supplies last)

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- Subscription to *Patient-Centered Design Online™*, electronic newsletter
- Name listed on our website
- Discount on publications
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- Email updates on grant opportunities
- Eligible for Partnership Collaboration

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Part of The Joint Commission's mission is "to continuously improve health care for the public (The Joint Commission, 2010)." It is important for patients to know that they may use The Joint Commission as a resource for finding hospitals, preparing for medical visits, learning about patient safety initiatives, and even filing complaints. According to Ken Powers, The Joint Commission is an "important part of something patients should consider (Powers, 2010)." The organization offers resources at www.qualitycheck.org where patients can search for Joint Commission accredited health care organizations by name, zip code or state.

Additionally, the Joint Commission encourages patients to speak up if they see something wrong in a health care facility or if they identify something done incorrectly. This is why the organization has launched a campaign called "Speak Up". The acronym encourages patients to *Speak up* if you have questions, *Pay attention* to the care you get, *Educate* yourself about your illness, *Ask* a trusted person to be your advocate, *Know* your medications, *Use a health care organization* that meets The Joint Commission's standards, and *Participate* in all decisions about your treatment (The Joint Commission, 2010). Taking a proactive approach to your health goes beyond medication. It begins with understanding your rights and privileges as a consumer and patient.

One area of the "Speak Up" campaign focuses on empowering patients to prevent errors in their health care. For instance, patients are encouraged to use "a hospital, clinic, surgery center, or other type of health care organization that has been carefully checked out (The Joint Commission, 2010)."

The Joint Commission is committed to maintaining hospital quality and patient safety in all accredited health care facilities. While The Joint Commission representatives manage certification requirements for accredited facilities and organizations, patients can help monitor standards. Anyone may file a complaint against an accredited facility through The Joint Commission's Office of Quality Monitoring. Complaints may be filed online at www.jointcommission.org or by calling 1-800-994-6610.

Patients, health care providers or designer interested in learning more about The Joint Commission's purpose and programs may visit www.jointcommission.org. The site offers a number of resources such as brochures, answers to frequently asked questions and even a guide to finding a "gold seal of approval" accredited health care facility. The website features patient tools such as *Planning Your Follow-Up Care: The Smart Patient's Health Journal*. The Institute for Patient-

Centered Design, Inc. (www.patientcentereddesign.org) provides this tool at no charge to its Patient Collaborators and participants in patient surveys. There are also a number of *Speak Up* brochures that can be printed at no charge on The Joint Commission's website. Health care facilities and designers may also be interested in the *Planning, Design and Construction of Health Care Facilities Guide*. This book can be ordered online or downloaded as a PDF book on the organization's website.

Whether for patients, health care providers or designers, The Joint Commission can be a valuable asset. Ultimately, this organization provides a number of resources and answers to questions pertaining to quality healthcare.

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

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Perspectives

Patients and designers, tell us what you think! What have you found to be your most helpful resource in navigating the healthcare system – as a patient or as a designer? How have you learned more about healthcare to prepare for an upcoming visit or to prepare yourself to design a clinical space? To share your perspective on this topic, please visit us at www.patientcentereddesign.org/perspectives.

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Please feel free to contact the editor with your questions, comments, or concerns at editor@patientcentereddesign.org

Brainstorming: Protecting Privacy and Dignity in Care Facilities

I recently visited a nursing home and witnessed a patient being wheeled down the corridor inappropriately clothed. It was obvious to me that the patient was being transported from the bathing facility back to his room. I wondered how this patient must have felt being exposed and on display as he traveled through the corridor. I was embarrassed to see him this way.

- Anonymous Family Member

It is unfortunate that this patient had to experience such a disregard for his personal privacy. Who was the responsible party? Some might suggest that the caregiver was at fault. After all, shouldn't he have been more considerate and respectful of the patient? Perhaps others might find the facility to blame. Shouldn't they have operational guidelines in place that would have prevented this incident? Does the family need to be present to oversee the staff in order to ensure that this does not happen? When the facility was planned, were methods to protect privacy considered? Were the bathing quarters too small for the patient to be dressed prior to leaving the bathing area? Should there have been a private corridor to shield these functions from public view?

Perhaps the more important question is what could be done differently to promote better practices. Patients, Family Members, Healthcare Providers and Designers, we would like to hear from you. What can be done to protect the privacy and preserve the dignity of patients who are unable to speak for themselves? What would you do to discourage these conditions? To share your perspective on this topic, please visit us at

www.patientcentereddesign.org/perspectives.



The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Patient-Centered Design, Inc. We respect the rights of patients, family members and professionals to express their opinions and welcome comments on the topics published in this newsletter. We reserve the right to publish comments and letters at our discretion.

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, After watching a television program that documented major mistakes made during surgery, I am very nervous about entering the hospital for treatment. What is being done to protect patients against medical errors?

-Anonymous

Dear Patient,

Thank you for your letter. This month, we feature an article that highlights some of the resources available through the Joint Commission. Please review this article for more information. The Joint Commission provides safety standards and a number of other programs that encourage healthcare facilities to improve patient safety. They also have programs that educate patients on the healthcare experience.

Patients may visit their website to search for and compare healthcare facilities. They also have a number of other tools available for patients preparing for a health appointment or hospital stay. You may also find a list of helpful links on our website, including quality check searches for patients. In addition, we provide a helpful toolkit for patients who join or complete a survey at no cost. Please see our site for more details.

The subject of medical errors is a hot topic in healthcare design. Researchers speculate that standardizing rooms and equipment may reduce medical error based on the success of standardization in reducing errors in industrial fields. There is also a movement to improve the staff's environment in efforts to reduce fatigue. Please know that this issue is very important to healthcare providers and their design teams. Effort to improve patient safety is ongoing in both the healthcare and design fields.

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