



## Healing by Architecture

How can Architecture contribute to healing?

For patients, visitors, or member of staff, spending long hours in the hospital can be a stressful experience. Access to a natural landscape or a garden can enhance peoples' ability to deal with stress and thus potentially improve health outcomes. Hospital in the past, green nature, sunlight and fresh air were seen as an essential components of healing.

Health is related to environment, more specifically the design environment. Hospital were avant-garde, and so was hospital design. Part of the reason for the acceptance of this way of thinking was its origin in Evidence Based Design.

A natural setting and the provision of clean air were seen as essential. A revolution in medicine and technology combined with the emergence of the International Style to transform hospital into a functional, medical machine.

High rise hospital built in the International Style resembled corporate office buildings; air conditioning replaced natural ventilation; outdoor spaces and balconies disappeared from hospitals; nature succumbed to cars and parking zones; and indoor setting designed for efficiency were often institutional and stressful for patients, visitors and staff.

Evidence Based Design did not develop as a specialization within the field of architecture. Evidence Based Design originates in the environmental psychology and its evolution is intimately linked the

work of Roger Ulrich. What sets it apart from its precursors is the ambition to measure the effects of the environment on the people who are exposed to it.

For example, in hospital environment, groups of patients who are placed in multiple bedrooms are compared to patients with a similar medical record but who spend their time in a single bedrooms. In the same way, the effects of rooms with or without a view on nature are compared: Even the effects of paintings hung on the bedroom walls have been evaluated; what are the effects of abstract painting compared to the impact of depicting nature scenery?

Most of the tests focus on stress; do specific environmental qualities increase stress, or do they help to calm patients...?

The outcomes of these studies provide sufficient evidence that presence of nature in or around buildings can positively influence health. Most specifically, it has been demonstrated that viewing nature on a screen or through a window can reduce stress and pain, while presence of indoor planting can lift people's mood and reduce self-reported symptoms of physical discomfort.

How this evidence can be used to enrich the architecture of hospital will be among the fundamental issues that will have to be addressed in future hospital design process. Does Healing by Architecture imply that architecture should adopt the scientific approaches of medicine?

In essence, there are many advantages in relation to a very small amount of capital investment. Not only are they advantages for the patients, but also to staff, who work in a stressful jobs, under difficult conditions. Improving of the work environment can be an important design element and investment.

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