

Do Generational Differences Impact Healthcare?

I was talking with my wife this morning about a relative who's currently hospitalized for chemotherapy treatment, and she mentioned to me that his two-year-old granddaughter had stopped in to encourage her "Monkey-Papa" (her nickname for him – kinda weird, but cute.).

I have no doubt, and the research shows, that family support can be critical in helping reduce patient anxiety and improve healthcare outcomes. But the discussion made me immediately flash back to vivid memories of my youth, when as a 6 or 7 year old, I spent innumerable hours in hospital lobby waiting areas — basically banned from visiting the actual room of any number of ailing relatives.

Things have obviously progressed significantly since the late '60s / early '70s, both in terms of visitation policies, as well as in the built environments designed to foster family involvement in care. Frankly, I can't even imagine the reaction of the Gen X parents if they were told that their daughter couldn't visit "Monkey-Papa" – they'd have been floored.

It's clear that each generation has different experiences and expectations as healthcare consumers and that seems to be true for healthcare providers as well.

Melanie Redman and Caroline Kelly are two really smart Senior Design Researchers for Steelcase Health and Steelcase, Inc. and they co authored a very interesting piece in the August 2011 issue of Healthcare Design Magazine entitled "Winning the War to Attract and Retain Healthcare Workers."

The piece details some new research / perspectives that Steelcase Health and Steelcase have developed on "Generation Y" – the generation now moving into healthcare professions. It talks about what makes 'em tick from a personal and professional perspective and how that is beginning to (and will even more in the near future) impact the healthcare industry as a whole.

The piece also offers some perspectives on what healthcare designers and healthcare in general can and need to do to attract, engage and retain the workers that they'll need moving forward.

It's a great piece – and you can read the full article [here](#).

After you read Mel and Caroline's take on the issue – if you'd like more on "generational impact" there's a great opportunity coming up at this year's [HealthCare Design Conference](#) in Nashville.

The [International Interior Design Association](#) will be hosting a Generational Healthcare Design panel discussion on Monday, Nov. 14th. The panel will be moderated by Jocelyn Stroupe, IIDA, AAHID, EDAC, Director of Healthcare Interiors, Cannon Design.

Panelists for the discussion will include: Julie Barkenbush, BSN, MHA, CEO Devenney Group Ltd., Architects; Kimberly Nelson Montague, AIA, Director of Design Consultation Services, Planetree; Jane Rohde, AIA, FIIDA, ACHA, AAHID, JSR Associates, Inc. and James Skraiky, Assistant Professor, Director of Healthcare Initiatives at Arizona State University.

HERE'S HOW IIDA DESCRIBES THE EVENT:

Who are we designing healthcare facilities for? Are we implementing what we know about our aging population in our designs? Health and wellness is changing how healthcare campuses are being perceived from treatment center to community center. Is the active lifestyle being considered in our designs? Are we thinking differently to design for the different generations?

Join a panel of diverse healthcare professionals as they explore these questions and other challenges of designing healthcare facilities to accommodate generations of today and those of the future.

Sounds interesting – and I'm pretty sure that they won't go back to banning 6-year-olds from visiting Grandma. □

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