Predictions for Healthcare Design Needs in the Next 5 Years

It’s no secret; the world of healthcare has been in significant transition. The various care models, decentralization of healthcare, as well as the significant integration of technology have changed the way environments work and serve those within them.

The Center for Health Design (CHD), during the development of its five-year strategic plan, uncovered three areas of focus in healthcare design for the next five years. These were decided on based on interviews with industry experts, including folks from Steelcase Health, and published in Healthcare Design Magazine.

This post highlights the anticipated needs in healthcare design. Predictions for the next 10 years of trends in healthcare design have also been included along with perspective provided by Margaret Alrutz, Steelcase Health’s Director of Healthcare Strategy. The intention is to provide a well-rounded overview of what’s around the corner in healthcare design.

NEEDS FOR HEALTHCARE DESIGN WILL INCLUDE:

1. **New Profit Centers** — looking at moving beyond acute care to preventative care and healthy living such as wellness and nutrition centers. These new venues provide ways to build credibility of healthcare organizations in the community beyond the rare acute care encounters.
2. **Geriatric-focused Spaces** — keeping in mind the growing population and their needs. Relate back to the pediatric environments that have now become the norm.

3. **HCAHPS Scores** (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) — a nationally standardized survey developed by CMS and AHRQ for measuring how patients perceive the care they receive in hospitals. The survey scores now tie patient satisfaction to reimbursement.

“Each of these topics can be a huge initiative in and of itself for healthcare leadership. One of the things Steelcase Health has tried to do is ask how we can help open up these individual discussions relative to healthcare environments,” said Alrutz.

Alrutz uses Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) as a way to further explain. “One example is rethinking the implications of HCAHPS, which is a hot-topic for any leader involved in the healthcare industry. For Steelcase Health, our approach was to first understand that HCAHPS is starting to feel like a burden — a set of requirements that are creating a sense of urgency and constraints on top of everything else providers have to do. Our goal was to pose a question using design thinking as a strategy, turn it on its head, and ask how HCAHPS can become a framework around patient experience innovation.”

“Steelcase Health has been meeting with clients and partners to explore how the many aspects of this survey might apply to the design of the physical environment,” said Alrutz.

“As we analyzed the HCAHPS survey, we saw four questions that are frequently associated with the design of space related to things like cleanliness or quietness. But we also saw a full 14 other questions about communication, and this is an area that Steelcase Health has studied intensely. We have created a series of scenarios for rethinking the design of a space based on communications needs, and therefore patient experience,” stated Alrutz.

Healthcare Design Magazine identified several upcoming trends that expand upon the anticipated healthcare design needs provided by the CHD Overall, the trend predictions are congruent with the assessed needs by the CHD and can be integrated and complementary.

**Anticipated trends as identified in Healthcare Design Magazine:**

1. **New Technologies** — Predictive health (keeping people well instead of treating them only when they’re sick) is supported by technology. There are also advancements of nanotechnology and more use of telemedicine and home monitoring equipment to observe and treat patients, including “do-it-yourself” diagnostic apps for smart phones/tablets to assist with predictive health.

2. **Experience Architecture** — For healthcare, this means more focus on the patient as a customer and finding ways to achieve better outcomes at reduced costs. It’s also about empowering patients to have more control over where they get their care and how it’s delivered. As we continue to move from a service economy to an experience economy this becomes significant.

3. **Staying Home** — As the hospital shrinks and becomes a place for only the most acute patients, the home is poised to become an extension of the acute care system.

4. **Flexibility** — As care is decentralized, spaces will need to be multifunctional, and buildings will need to be adaptable to meet changing modes of delivery and information technology.

“Steelcase Health has strategic initiatives toward all of these issues, which can be thought of either as problem areas or opportunities. The job for Steelcase Health is to think about how we can redefine the problem area as an opportunity,” continued Alrutz. “At Steelcase Health, we believe that the design of an environment can help to empower and connect the people in that space, and overall we strive to humanize that entire experience.”
“By incorporating the three overarching design principles of empowering, connecting, and humanizing, we believe you impact patient satisfaction which in turn drives better outcomes. Just as we have applied these three principles to the concept of patient satisfaction, we have found these principles to be an effective lens to be applied to all these issues,” concludes Alrutz.

So, were you surprised by any of the needs or predicted trends? Where do you think healthcare design is headed in the next 5-10 years? Join in the conversation.