

Better Waiting Rooms Simply Can't Wait

It's midafternoon in the waiting area of a large medical clinic. The door that leads to patient care areas quietly opens and patients' eyes dart expectantly, hoping to hear their name called. The announcement is made; one name is called. Disappointment and anxiety ripple through the room. An older woman gathers her belongings that are spread out over a couple of chairs. She rises slowly, obviously in pain, and walks to the door, unsure what news awaits on the other side.

At the other end of the room, a family is trying to find space to gather and talk about questions they have for the doctor. They've moved toward a corner to find some privacy, but chairs are lined up in orderly rows from end to end, preventing them from being able to look at one another. Some sit, some stand, but no one looks comfortable.

This familiar scene plays out across the globe every day at healthcare facilities of all sizes. [Healthcare waiting rooms](#), at their worst, can look and feel like holding pens, designed to seat the most patients in as little room as possible, providing few physical or emotional comforts. At their best, these spaces can offer a smooth transition from physical pain and emotional uncertainty to vital information and relief.

Unfortunately, today, many patients' experiences are less than optimal as they wait.

Steelcase Health researchers have found that positive waiting experiences and space design are linked with the perception of quality care, a key metric for today's healthcare organizations. This insight offers practical implications: Well-designed waiting experiences that decrease stress and promote active engagement can help improve patient satisfaction scores both during waiting and subsequent care encounters. With pressure mounting to deliver more patient-centered care and better satisfaction scores, progressive healthcare organizations are already leveraging their waiting spaces as a competitive advantage, and seeing positive results.

This is an excerpt of a story included in a new publication "Exam + Waiting Experiences Reimagined." by Steelcase Health. [Start here to get the full booklet.](#)

Get the Booklet

In this new publication, Steelcase Health explores two key issues facing healthcare. The first is how to evolve the exam room from an outdated space to one that builds new levels of patient trust and confidence—making them active participants in their care. The second article involves the waiting room experience: turning it from a passive environment to one that actively supports our physical, technological, and emotional needs.

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