

Patient Safety + Support: Infusion Therapy Space Design

Fighting chronic illnesses, like cancer, congestive heart failure, and Crohn's disease, among others, can be a trying and scary time for a patient and their friends and family. It's imperative that infusion therapy environments respect these difficult moments, and ensure the highest level possible of comfort, privacy and safety for users. Unfortunately, traditional infusion therapy spaces seldom accommodate the changing needs of clinicians, patients and family members.

Providing an ecosystem of environments with differing levels of privacy that also maintain collaboration, communication and support ensures that the unique requirements of patients, family members and clinicians are met. **The need is clear: it is essential that treatment spaces balance patient support and safety.**

- For most patients, treatment is a blurry combination of anxiety and hope, loss of control and diminished independence. It's a time of confusion and acceptance, and physical and emotional turmoil.
- For family members, it's marked by feelings of helplessness and stress, trying to cope with the competing and immediate needs of their loved one, other family members and employers.
- For clinicians, it's a workplace focused on patient surveillance, access to information and collaboration, and patient/family education and support.

An article in the most recent [Steelcase 360 Magazine](#), titled "[An Ecosystem of Spaces for Infusion Therapy](#)", dives deep into these issues, and presents solutions for infusion therapy spaces that benefit clinicians, patients, and partners in care.

PATIENT SAFETY

"From a clinical perspective, safety is the paramount concern," says Michelle Ossmann, director of healthcare environments for Steelcase Health. "This is a time when patients are at risk for life-threatening reactions to their treatments and at risk for falls, so nurses must be able to observe their patients. And, as in any clinical setting but especially where many patients are immunosuppressed, infection control is a great concern."

Steelcase Health researchers observed that recliners in infusion therapy spaces aren't designed for IV-connected patients, especially those who may be experiencing weakness in their extremities:

- Recline controls are usually only on one side of the chair and rely heavily on dexterity and strength.
- Posture choices are limited, and the recliners are usually overstuffed, making them hard to clean and unhygienic.
- Recliners are hard to get in and out of, and often patients find them uncomfortable during long treatments.
- For clinicians, these poorly designed recliners make it more difficult to tend to patients and add an increased risk of injury.

“Giving patients control over their posture and physical comfort helps them maintain some independence and helps keep them safe,” Ossmann added. Safety extends well beyond infection control and safe equipment use, it’s also critical that spaces be designed with clear sight lines between clinicians and patients. Medicine must be administered with great precision, and visual monitoring is imperative to check for side effects. That sense of safety incumbent in a well-designed space can be a great comfort for patients and their families.

PATIENT SUPPORT

Family members and friends often accompany patients to appointments, and provide essential emotional support. However, many waiting room and treatment area designs imply that family members are an imposition, lacking simple conveniences like comfortable seating, storage for personal items or outlets to charge electronic devices. These environments must support family and friends, so that they can carry on their vital role of supporting the patients.

This includes allowing them a place to rest and recharge. Many appointments are early morning, and current spaces rarely are adequate in providing a place for caregivers to rest.

[Read the full article](#) for advice on how to design infusion therapy spaces optimized for people, place and technology.

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