

Worker Wellbeing, Virtual Care, Sustainability Latest Healthcare Priorities

2024 Healthcare Design Conference + Expo highlights best practices, needs and future direction

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Clinician wellbeing, technology for virtual care experiences, and a greater focus on sustainability are key emerging priorities for the healthcare design industry, as demonstrated at the 2024 Healthcare Design Conference + Expo. Each year, the conference brings together industry leaders, designers, and innovators to explore the impact of built environments on healthcare experiences. It is a pivotal gathering for professionals advancing healthcare design through best practices and innovative products. Steelcase Health had the opportunity to connect, learn and showcase our latest solutions, and our team gathered critical insights during the event.

CLINICIAN CARE + JOY AT WORK

Caring for those who care for patients can sometimes be overlooked, even in their own work environments. Doctors, nurses, and other caregivers face daily challenges that can affect their health and lead to burnout, but those same factors can also impact patient care. Healthcare organizations increasingly prioritize their workers' engagement, productivity, and wellbeing. Cassie Holmes, a chaired professor at UCLA Anderson School of Management, emphasized this in her opening keynote, "Prioritizing Happiness Drives Creativity, Engagement at Work." Holmes highlighted how investing time in joyful tasks can enhance personal and professional lives.

VIRTUAL CARE, REAL CONNECTION

Technology – including AI integration – rapidly and continuously transforms hospitals and enhances everything from patient care to daily operations. In a session titled 'Emerging Technology and Integration for the Hospital of the Future,' experts discussed innovative tools like telehealth, remote patient monitoring, and autonomous robots for delivering supplies. These advancements aim to improve patient experiences and ease the workload of hospital staff. Additionally, digital tools streamline workflows and make facility planning and management more efficient. A notable example of telehealth innovation is [Ocular View by Steelcase](#), which won the Gold Nightingale Award for its technology-integrated solutions. The Steelcase Ocular View is an immersive, extended reality meeting experience co-developed with Logitech, designed to make virtual conversations feel as natural and personal as in-person meetings.

A HEALING TOUCH

Colors, shapes, and patterns impact how we feel about a space. In collaboration with [Designtex](#), Steelcase presented a session on “Infusing Joy into Healthcare Through Textiles.” This session explored how design elements create environments that foster calmness, safety, and assurance while being easily maintained and cleaned. Designtex’s research-based approach to textile design seeks to evoke a joyful response from patients – while also being more welcoming and therapeutic. Materials are crucial for developing healthcare spaces that are both functional and emotionally supportive.

A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT FUTURE

Sustainability was a primary focus at the conference, with sessions dedicated to building a net-zero carbon future and sustainable product sourcing. Katie VanWagner of Steelcase Health noted that sustainability can mean different things to different organizations within healthcare. Sustainability can involve sourcing environmentally friendly materials, or it could refer to a product’s longevity and how it can be disposed of or reused. Defining clear sustainability goals is essential, and there is a growing awareness of the need for environmentally friendly ecosystems. “The growing awareness and demand for environmentally friendly products in the healthcare sector highlights the importance of sustainability,” VanWagner said. “It shows the importance of relationship building and collaboration in achieving a more sustainable healthcare ecosystem.”

Overall, the conference demonstrated that better healthcare experiences require a focus on each person involved in the experience, including the patient, family, clinician and staff. At Steelcase Health, we believe better healthcare spaces balance the caring with the clinical. From welcoming waiting and transition areas to reassuring bays to places for clinician work and respite – all play a meaningful part in making spaces for health.

Explore more of our research and solutions at [SteelcaseHealth.com](#) or get a copy of our latest [lookbook](#) for healthcare.