

Are waiting areas in hospitals perceived as therapeutic spaces? by Eleni Tsiantou

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Abstract

Waiting in hospitals is a common problem all over the world. The period of waiting depends on a range of factors but the negative feelings that most users develop during that period are similar, with stress being the most common. According to the literature, the physical environment affects individuals' mood, behaviour and some design features, in particular, can act as therapeutic elements enhancing users' wellbeing.

The purpose of this study is to explore users', regulators' and architects' perspectives about the therapeutic value of waiting areas in hospitals. To attain these perceptions, I reviewed existing studies and published articles for users' opinion, healthcare design guidelines for regulators' views and awarded hospitals' waiting areas for architect's thoughts. My hypothesis was that users and architects perceive the waiting areas as spaces of a hospital that can have a therapeutic role but regulators do not which was supported by my findings. Specifically, there are plenty of studies conducted in hospitals' waiting areas which concluded that users can identify the benefits of a well-designed therapeutic environment. Also, architects seem to value the waiting spaces of hospitals because they use them as examples in the buildings' presentation and integrate evidence-design principles in their projects as much as possible.

Keywords: waiting, waiting areas, hospitals, therapeutic environment, evidencebased design

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