

Buildings and Human Habitation, Department of Environmental Health
September 2017, 4th Year

Health Building

The World Health Organization defined “health” as “a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1946

Healthcare facilities should provide a therapeutic environment in which the overall design of the building contributes to the process of healing and reduces the risk of healthcare-associated infections rather than simply being a place where treatment takes place

Healthcare buildings exist primarily for the patients and other people who use them. As mentioned, there is a growing body of evidence that if the design is right, satisfaction levels improve as do patients’ health .outcomes and staff productivity

A research by the University of Sheffield (UK) found that it was more beneficial to concentrate on the needs and activities of all users – patients, .staff and others

Examples of activities that occur in healthcare premises include:

- arriving;
- moving around the building;
- waiting;
- resting in in-patient facilities;
- consultation, diagnosis, undergoing tests, examination and treatment;
- socialising and meeting;
- shopping;
- bathing, showering, washing, toilet and grooming;
- counselling/sanctuary.

Access

The site of any healthcare facility should be convenient both to the community and to service vehicles, including fire appliances, ambulances and other emergency vehicles. Consideration should be given to:

- access and easy circulation for patients, staff and visitors (both non-disabled and disabled) on foot, on bicycles, in cars or on public transport (sustainable transport considerations should be encapsulated in a transport plan);

dedicated blue-light routes; •
a discrete, segregated access for goods vehicles to receiving •
and delivery areas.
Liaison with the local highway authority should also take place.

Arriving (outside) the Hospital

Introduction of character to the main entrance helps people identify it more willingly and can create a sense of uniqueness, friendliness and individuality for buildings that often seem institutional or faceless. ▶

- High and generous entrance ways feel welcoming and uplifting.
- Low or narrow entrances are claustrophobic and oppressive, not easily identified and can cause uncertainty.
- The perceived height of the entrance way will be relative to the building rather than people, so this should be accounted for when the main building is several storeys.
- Generous space leading up to the entrance further confirms its presence, projects confidence and creates an easily identifiable meeting point.
- Entrance areas should provide a number of meeting points and places for people to rest or wait.
- There should be uninterrupted and clear views of the entrance from the approach to the site.
- Low level signs and planting help maintain a clear view to the entrance way.
- Interesting views can be created for people waiting or resting near the entrance.
 - Protection from the elements should be provided around the entrance.
 - Structures such as canopies and landscaping (with trees and bushes) shelter an entrance from sun, rain, wind and, increasingly in city centres, noise.
- Nature and greenery around the entrance is reassuring and calming.

6 Evidence-based design ideas for a therapeutic environment

Arriving (outside)

Provide canopy for shelter from wind, rain + sun on arrival/departure

Well-lit entrances feel safe + secure but must be free of hazards

Provide a minimum of essential directional information

Easy drop off/ collection point

Design surfaces for all users. Use non-slip colour contrast materials + drop kerbs

Reorientation cues to signal arrival/ departure & recognise different modes of arrival/ departure

Plants/trees/shrubs: inspire confidence, security, safety + modernity but must be well-kept

Lighting creates welcoming cheerful impression

Provide monitored external seating for waiting with adequate lighting + security

External appearance to inspire confidence + well-cared-for look

Obvious visual cues for wayfinding + easy transition (signage, art & sculpture)



