



HEALTHCARE CENTERS

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How to use Colors at Healthcare Centers

Most healthcare centers choose to paint their buildings white as it is often associated with cleanliness and hygiene. But painting spaces entirely white gives off an air of coldness, making healthcare centers look more intimidating than they really are. The view that how environments where patients receive treatment are designed and painted influences patients' perceptions on their treatments and their recovery has been gaining currency in recent years. Carefully chosen wall colors, flooring and furniture can have positive impact on a person's health.

Colors should not just be for creating aesthetic impact at health centers. Well-chosen decorative elements can help create a pleasant environment and make the patients feel more relaxed and comfortable.

Recent neuro-scientific studies and 24-hour rhythm studies show that the color spectrum exercises a direct impact on the human biological system and health. (Edelstein, 2008). Psychological and physiological responses to colors, biophilic designs (harmony with nature's colors), color theory and practice, colors chosen according to aging eyes, cultural significance ascribed to certain colors, are factors that should be taken into account when designing health centers.



While colors can evoke negative or positive sentiments in people, they can also contribute to their diagnosis. The light and color of the environment are known for complicating diagnosis of certain skin diseases. For example, the color yellow or blue reflecting off the surface may create difficulties with diagnosing yellowing of the skin in liver disorders. Diagnosis may also be tricky with cyanosis, a bluish discoloration of the skin and mucous membranes due to deoxygenation.

Yellow is a warm color that signifies happiness, joy and energy, but overdoing it can make babies cry, which is why

Yellow should only be used in moderation in birth and newborn services. Neutral colors and soft warm colors may be used instead.



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Red, on the other hand, is not suitable for use in cardiac units because it is a powerful color full of energy that increases blood pressure.

Another example that attests to the significance of color choice at health care centers is anorexia and obesity units, which should be in different colors because while blue suppresses the appetite, lowering blood pressure and is therefore fit for use at obesity units or centers, orange increases the appetite, stimulates the brain, and triggers socialization urges, making it fit for use at anorexia units. Orange should be avoided for psychiatric wards since it may cause over-stimulation of mental activities.

Yellow and red are two colors that can be used at children's playgrounds or other areas designed for creative activities. These two colors are also known for increasing social confidence. Green and blue, on the other hand, should be used in areas designed for quieter activities requiring concentration and focus. (Sharpe, 1974).

While cool colors can be used in rooms or areas intended for edgy, twitchy and anxious patients with hypertension, red and orange can be considered for patients suffering from depression.

Highly saturated colors should not be used in autism and schizophrenia wards, people with epilepsy or other neurological disorders should not be exposed to colors that are too red or too stimulating as it may trigger seizures. (Sharpe, 1974).

Overly bright colors with distinct contrasts should not be used in areas where psychotic patients stay. Such patients are susceptible to negative influences from such colors not when they wear them, but rather when they find themselves in an environment painted in such colors. It may leave a tiring, intimidating and frightening impression. Calming neutral colors with soft, warm tones may instead be used.

Staying in a room painted with warm colors may create the impression time passes more slowly than usual. Objects may seem heavier and bigger than they are, and the room may look smaller than its actual size. Warm colors can be used in areas designed for fast food and where strenuous, physically demanding activities are carried out.

It is quite the opposite for cool colors. Being in a room painted with cool colors may create the impression time passes faster than usual. Rooms look bigger than their actual size while objects seem lighter and smaller (Birren, 1978). Cool colors can be used in areas where monotonous work is done. They counteract the negative impact of noise (Sharpe, 1974). They can be

combined with neutral colors in areas where MR machines are used, helping relieve anxiety and distress which one feels when one enters an MR machine.


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Research shows that while nurses that need a short break can do so perfectly in a room illuminated with bright lights and strong tones, nurses who require longer breaks to freshen up should prefer rooms lightly illuminated and painted darker colors. That same rule also applies to those working night shifts.



Functional factors that need taking into account when choosing colors for healthcare centers

- 1- The effect of light and matter on color
- 2- The age profile of people using the area
- 3- Are the people using the area patients or visitors and how much time will they be spending there?
- 4- What is the nature of the disease the patient is suffering from, its characteristics and severity?
- 5- The relation of the disease in terms of color blindness and color perception
- 6- The suitability of the chosen colors for children
- 7- Whether contrasting colors need to be used
- 8- Is the area intended to inspire calm and tranquility or stimulate the senses?
- 9- Are both a calm and warm effect sought?
- 10- Avoiding the use of colors intended for hazard detection in different places in the same area



In-patient rooms

Patient rooms should be painted in colors which inspire calm and serenity, and are not too heavy on the senses, evoking familiarity. The lighting and the colors should not be too bright. Overly bright colors can be both tiring and disturbing for patients who spend most of their time in their rooms. With patients taken fresh out of the operating room into their rooms, doctors may experience issues with checking their eyes if the room is too brightly illuminated and colored.

Primary colors: Cactus 160, 190; April 10; Dawn 130, 135, 140; Dawn 10; Hibiscus 130, 160; Mat 10; Fennel 40, 45

Accent: Mat 20, 75, Hibiscus 140, Hibiscus 45, 105, 110, Glimmer 180



Operating Rooms



Using green or the combination blue/green for the walls of operating rooms is good for relieving the eyes of doctors who see lots of blood every day. As green sits on the opposite end of the color spectrum to red, it is the perfect choice for relieving the stress on the eyes of the doctors. Cooler colors with less saturation should be chosen for these areas.

Colors: Cactus 195, 200, 205; Brook 80,110



Pediatric Units

Child services must be engaging and energetic. Children are usually thrilled by energetic splashes of color supplemented by colors in bluish tones that help relieve anxiety, lower the pulse rate and do not create confusion.

Main Walls: Blue Splashes 145, 235, 240; Irmak 110, 115; Yaprak 140, 145

Accent: Carnival 150; Spark 30, 150; Bouquet 105; September 210, 180



Intensive Care

Intensive care rooms should be relaxing and calming. Walls should be painted in neutral colors to avoid creating a cold environment both physically and psychologically while light coffee and light green tones with a soothing effect can be used to accentuate the colors' impact. Aside from walls, cool colors can be used for floors and other accessories.

Main Walls: Hibiscus 130; Geranium 75; Beige 35, 40; Mat 10, 15, 75; Dawn 100

Accent: Hibiscus 135; Mat 20, 140, 85; April 20, 25



Examination Rooms

Calming neutral colors can also be used in the examination rooms. If it is not an eye examination room, stronger but calm colors can be used on walls to form a contrast with the doctor's or the secretary's desk. The walls in examination rooms can be painted terra cotta or brownish tones that are not too heavy on the eyes.

Main walls: Cherry laurel 160, 165; Geranium 40, 20; Mat 10, 15, 70, 75; Cactus 165, 190; Bouquet 75, 80



Dentists' Examination Rooms

Even the idea of walking into a dentist's office may cause feelings of anxiety and distress. Some people report having had their worst medical experiences at a dentist's office. More than 125 studies were conducted in the USA on this subject and the parameters such as appropriate light, color, sound control, space have been taken into account. The color of the signboard at the entrance and refreshing lights are very important in making a first good impression.

The following wall colors can be used as main wall and accent colors in a dentist's office. These colors have a calming and soothing effect.

Colors: Hibiscus 200; Mat 25, 30; Bouquet 25, 30, 85, 90; Dawn 165, 170; Glimmer 100, 105; Brook 105



Hospital Cafes and Restaurants

Hospitals cafes and restaurants should be designed to give an energetic vibe, being spaces designed for leisure time. In areas where warm colors are used, people feel more relaxed and comfortable. Using warm colors in such areas turns those spaces into convenient places for chatting, eating, and having a good time. Dark accents may be chosen for columns, if there are any.

Primary Colors: Amber 10, 15; Dawn 70, 75, 100, 160, 165

Accent:September 120, 125; Spark 60, 210; Coral 270, 275



Waiting Areas

Since most people waiting in hospitals spend most of their time at waiting areas, those areas should be painted colors that look appealing, soothing and pleasing to the eye but care should be taken to ensure that they give comfort to the patients without overstimulating the senses. Using visually striking accents is also handy when it comes to segregating units.

Primary Colors: Fennel 100; Rye 10, 15, 35, 40, 45; Beige 15, 25, 30; Mat 105, 110

Accent: Cactus 135, 140; Leaf 75; Bouquet 45; Cherry laurel 230, 165, 170; Hibiscus 45, 75, 140; Mat 25; Amber 120



Labs

Shades of pale green, skin tones, golden yellow and marine blue can be used for sterilized rooms and laboratories. If the laboratory or sterile room is used for color discrimination, pearly gray tones are appropriate.

Colors: Cactus 130; Bouquet 100; Dawn 70, 100; Cosmic 165, 170; Mat 110; Amber 115



Treatment Rooms

Shades of light blue and marine blue can be used for physical therapy or radio therapy rooms. They reduce muscle tension and add liveliness and brightness to skin color aside from creating a cold and hygienic atmosphere. Shades of pale orange or yellow inspire happiness and joy for work and occupational therapy.

Colors: Cosmic 130, 135, 220, 225, 170, 190, 255; September 130, 170, 175; Amber 165, 170



Corridors & Receptions

The corridors of hospitals and healthcare facilities can sometimes seem eerily unfamiliar and confusing. Strong accents need to be used especially at the end of long and winding corridors to help people find their way around the hospital more easily. These accents may both be used for giving directions and segregating units from each other. The back walls of reception and front desk areas need to be painted in colors with stronger hues to make them easily recognizable by visitors to the hospital. The use of warm and cool colors may vary according to departments. While warm colors such as light orange, pale yellow-orange, and beige-orange can be used for pediatric corridors, cool colors such as moss green or blue-green can be considered for intensive care units. If peach tones are being considered for long corridors, a different shade of the same tone can be used for the other end of the corridor while the opposite end of the same corridor can be painted middle shades of blue. If you are aiming for that cold impact, one end of the wall can be painted light beige while the other end can be painted pale green, with the corridor end painted orange or red.

EEG brain scans have been performed on patients to find out whether the color of hospital corridors in psychiatric wards has a positive impact on patient relationships and communication, or their social skills and speech patterns; and the scans point to a positive change in their speech patterns. Edgerton, Ritchie, and McKechnie (2010).

Colors: September 130, 135; September 160, 165, 170; Amber 175, 180; Bouquet 60, 65; Cactus 150; Leaf 105; Cosmic 200, 230, 260; Rye 35, 40, 60, 65; Bouquet 130, 135, 165

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