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The psychology of color in healthcare design

Kelsie Schrader | Inspired, Thoughts | 1 Comment



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Color has long been known to have both psychological and physiological effects on humans. For example, such, business owners and marketers often give extensive thought to the colors they choose



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The psychology of color

Color is everywhere, and it influences our moods and emotions more than we realize. A 2014 article in CodeCondo, *How to Use Color Psychology in Your Web Design Projects*, discussed the emotions commonly evoked by popular colors. Whereas red conveys strength and passion and increases aggression, blue conveys peace and trustworthiness and evokes tranquility. Yellow suggests vibrancy and cheerfulness, and orange conveys friendliness and creativity.

Retail stores and marketers use the psychology of color to their advantage frequently. Take, for example, sale signs in retail stores. They are almost always stop-sign red. Red is seen as a bold color— one of aggression, forcefulness and passion. Like a red traffic signal or flashing police lights, red tells you to stop, to pay attention, to take action. When you see a red sign boasting of a great sale, you not only stop to read it, but you also feel more urgency to take action.

When creating a website or brand logo, color is very important as well. Marketers must consider the audience they are targeting—men or women, adults or children, upper class or middle class. Different colors speak to different groups. For example, as CodeCondo pointed out, companies that deal with money, such as PayPal, often use blue on their websites as a means of conveying loyalty and trustworthiness. Companies that target children frequently accent with yellows and oranges, as they communicate vibrancy, youthfulness and happiness.

Choosing the right color can attract the right audience and subliminally affect their mood and behavior. A happy, relaxed customer means a happy shopper. Color is more influential than we realize.



Photo credit of [paypal.com](https://www.paypal.com)

Chromotherapy

Some health practitioners believe in the physical healing power of light and colors in solving medical problems. There are, however, certainly many who doubt such medical treatment. Indeed, there exists little reliable scientific research in support of these beliefs.

A detailed explanation of chromotherapy can be found [here](#), but a simplified version of chromotherapy via [WebMD](#) reads: "A chromotherapist applies specific colors or lights to specific points on the body called 'chakras.' Different colors have different effects. For example, red is thought to increase pulse rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate. Therefore, it is often used for circulatory conditions. Blue is believed to cause relaxation and calm. Therefore, blue is used for headaches, pain, cramping, stress, and other conditions."

Though this approach can be neither endorsed nor discounted due to a lack of viable research, it



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COLOR IN HEALTHCARE DESIGN

While research has yet to prove the viability of chromotherapy, it has shown that high stress and happiness levels have significant health consequences.

According to the [American Psychological Association](#), stress can not only worsen existing health problems, but it can also generate new health concerns. Cardiologists Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman discovered that those with Type A personalities—those who are highly time-conscious, anxious, ambitious, rigidly organized, impatient, etc.—are more likely than those with Type B personalities to experience cardiovascular disease, among other health complications.

Moreover, in 2013, [ABC News](#) reported that positive mood and happiness are linked to overall better health.

If lower stress levels and positive mood improve health, and if certain colors can encourage calmness and happiness, then wouldn't it seem that exposure to those colors would have at least an indirect effect on overall health?

Think about it. If someone is in a hospital, they're probably not the most relaxed they've ever been. Something either is or could be wrong with them. The problem is, prolonged stress can suppress important blood cells, weakening the immune system and making recovery more difficult.



In a hospital, then, a simple way to encourage calmness is to paint the walls soothing colors. An article in [Healthcare Design Magazine](#) said, "Cool colors tend to be more calming, so things like blue and green are in the blues and the blue-greens, those types of colors really put people at ease because they



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help the younger patients to feel a little more relaxed and happy, reducing their stress and anxiety. Just as in marketing, the “audience” matters.

Color and health

There’s no scientific research to show that a blue wall in a patient room speeds up the recovery process or that a red wall slows recovery. It’s highly unlikely that color has any direct impact on physical health. However, just as in marketing and retail, color in healthcare facilities can affect mood, which *does* have an impact on health. The health benefits of color are indirect.

It’s important, then, that designers consider the psychology of color when designing healthcare facilities. The colors they choose could be more impactful than they realize.

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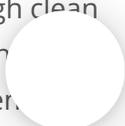
 <p>Reduce stress with healthcare</p>	 <p>Healthcare design with</p>	 <p>This week in Pinspiration:</p>	 <p>Healthcare design doesn't</p>
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Design Healthcare



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Duncan Lance | Jun 12, 2018 at 8:18 pm

There are a lot of different ways that color psychology can be applied to healthcare design and it is great that the article goes over so many. I think it is particularly cool that the article brings up how it can be used to help reduce stress. After all, stress can definitely worsen some medical conditions, so finding different ways to help people get around it, like showing them a soothing color, can definitely help.

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