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Zahra Zamani, Ewing Cole
Nicholas Watkins

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The Impact of Examination Room Design on Patient-Centered Outcomes

Contemporary changes in healthcare policy and delivery necessitate healthcare settings that are efficient, patient-centered, and accommodate outpatient care. However, there is a lack of original design research of key spaces within clinics, such as examination rooms, and their impact on patient-centered care. The purpose of this literature review was to identify existing refereed studies that measure the impact of examination room design features on patient-care provider communication, patients’ perceived quality of care, patient satisfaction, patient self-disclosure, care provider workflow, and operational costs. A comprehensive online database search was conducted from Web of Science, Google Scholar, PubMed, and Science Direct using a combination of synonyms of the terms, such as “examination room”, “communication”, or “examination table”. Refereed English articles, published from 2009 to 2016 were selected for the literature review, yielding a total of 59 relevant studies. Several of the findings had direct implications for examination room design. Studies revealed that patients’ positive perceptions of the examination room’s ambient conditions (e.g., noise, lighting) were linked with patients’ satisfaction, perceived quality of care, perceived wait time, and quality of interactions with care providers. Innovations such as dual entry exam rooms and patient-self-rooming strategies reduced noise and cost expenses, as well as enhanced privacy, flow, and staff satisfaction. Compared to smaller rooms, larger spaces were more positively perceived. Individuals responded to spatial intrusions by readjusting their posture, interpersonal distancing, and avoiding eye contact. Levels of room lighting correlated with disclosure and relaxation by patients. Multiple studies implicated the need for adjustable examination tables or alternative examination table solutions. Information sharing, patient participation in care, and patient satisfaction were impacted by orientation of computer monitors, and seating arrangements. These findings suggest that a sharper design research focus on examination room design is very promising for design standards and the patient experience.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the importance of incorporating distraction activities in waiting rooms.
- Distinguish distraction and non-distraction behaviors in healthcare environments.
- Apply interactive technologies to enhance opportunities for distraction activities.
- Understand the importance of ED waiting rooms with high visibility surveillance and safety facilities.