
Better Hospital Design From Ground Up



The William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital opened in December 2014 and received the Rising Star Award from the University HealthSystem Consortium. The reason for its tremendous performance can be attributed to making both patients and frontline healthcare professionals the true architects of the project. These are some of the key features of the hospital's innovative planning process:

The Process: The hospital placed the patients' interest above all else. Twelve planning groups, comprising of physicians, nurses, other staff, trainees, patients and community members met weekly for three months. The planning group members communicated to the architects exactly what they needed and in this manner, they were able to come up with the best-possible collaborative design. Not only did everybody have a chance to give their opinion but the entire design phase lasted only nine months.

Involving Patients: The hospital team did not simply solicit general input from the patients but instead asked them about their specific needs. By doing this they were able to get ideas that are generally not even considered when designing a hospital. For example patients highlighted the need for a separate discharge exit with designated parking and a pathway so that they could avoid interacting with people when leaving the hospital. They asked for more comfortable furniture in patients' rooms. They requested digital connectivity to enable videoconferencing with family, friends and other healthcare providers.

Outside Expertise: The planning groups looked beyond traditional healthcare environments. They consulted with designers of hotels and airline lounges and were surprised at the things they learnt about functional waiting areas and sustainable furniture and materials. They also consulted with companies like Texas Instruments to understand more about moving and storing supplies. Based on their consultation with experts from different industries, they were able to make their hospital design more efficient and effective. For example they designed guest elevators to open to the same view - the guest entrance and the visitor parking. They selected the best technology partners to ensure they have the most cutting-edge products. This approach saved both time and money and improved their design significantly.

Testing and Assessing: The design team collected written feedback on all its plans from more than 600 nurses, physicians, staff, patients and community members. Everything - from the spatial layout, materials, furnishings and finishes were evaluated. On the basis of everyone's input, they designed rooms that were easier to clean; they used computer simulation to identify optimal adjacencies etc.

Based on an innovative design approach, the hospital opened five months ahead of schedule and won national recognition for its quality and safety in its first year. Because of the efficiency with which everything was done, the hospital was built under budget enabling the team to use the savings to add an extra patient-care floor, a second parking garage and an above-ground roadway.

Source: [Harvard Business Review](#)

Image Credit: University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center

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