



Inpatient Unit Flexibility: Design Characteristics of a Successful Flexible Unit

AUTHOR(S)

Debajyoti Pati and Thomas Harvey. (2009). World Health Design, 2(3), 56-63.

ABSTRACT:

Flexibility in healthcare design is typically addressed from an architectural perspective without a systematic understanding of its meaning from the viewpoint of the end user. Moreover, the architectural perspective has generally focused on expandability and convertibility. This study explored flexibility needs in adult medical-surgical inpatient care with the aim of understanding its meaning from an end-user perspective, as well as identifying the characteristics in the physical environment that promote or impede stakeholders' requirements. We used a qualitative design and conducted semi-structured interviews with 48 stakeholders in nursing and nursing-support services at six hospitals across the US.

Data was collected from September to November 2006. The findings suggest that adaptability influences more aspects of unit operations than convertibility or expandability. Furthermore, physical design characteristics impact on nine critical operational issues where flexibility is required, spanning nursing, environmental services, materials management, dietary services, pharmacy and respiratory therapy.

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