

The Academy Journal

[HOME](#) [CONTENTS](#) [ARCHIVES](#) [CALL FOR PAPERS](#)

A New Concept in Convenient Community Care **Physicians Plus**



W. Jerry Murray, AIA NCARB
Vice President
Rooney Clinger Murray,
Architects
Findlay, Ohio

Published by
The Academy
of Architecture
for Health

A Professional
Interest Area of The
American Institute
of Architects

[Photos](#)

[Go to Article](#)

Like a gleaming vessel of the future sitting in the fields north of Findlay, Ohio; Physicians Plus is more than a building. Physicians Plus is a concept which beckons clients to try a new way of receiving health care.

The concept is simple: give a patient control and place them in an environment that encourages health through clarity and convenience. Prompt access to services is a primary convenience criterion. Depending on your health care needs, services on-site include diagnostics and treatment, x-ray imaging, pharmacy, physical therapy and lab services including perhaps the most innovative concept in health care delivery today: drive-in blood draw and blood pressure services. The essence of Physicians Plus as a building and as a concept is giving control of the delivery of health care to the patient.

The desire is not to automate the practice of medicine, but to automate a patient's access to medicine. "Our computers will be able to provide patients with a wealth of health-related information, and take the tedium out of the registration process and repetitive tasks," emphasizes William E. Ruse, President of Blanchard Valley Health Association. "This will free our physicians and nurses to spend their time practicing medicine--not struggling with paperwork."

The keeper of the chart has traditionally controlled medical care. By allowing the patient to carry his personal medical history with him on a Smart Card, the Physicians Plus concept will empower the patient to control the type of service he receives; when and where he chooses to receive it.

The Academy Journal

[HOME](#) [CONTENTS](#) [ARCHIVES](#) [CALL FOR PAPERS](#)

A New Concept in Convenient Community Care **Physicians Plus**

W. Jerry Murray, AIA NCARB
Vice President
Rooney Clinger Murray, Architects
Findlay, Ohio

Imagine that you are traveling in an unfamiliar community. Business or pleasure, you are far from home and your family doctor. But you know that something is not right with your body. Is it the flu or are you just tired? Are the pains related to last month's surgery or today's chill? What do you do?

Now imagine the future. You are traveling and you need health care. Your appointments have been booked months in advance so you need something quick and affordable. Dialing the toll free number on the back of your Smart Card, you find that there is a Physicians Plus Urgent Care Center only a few miles away.

Pulling into the parking lot, you recognize the signature architecture and Physicians Plus logo. Walking into the front entrance, you acknowledge the Hostess but to save time, seat yourself at a self-registration station in the Virtual Room. After swiping your Smart Card, the computer recognizes your personal data, and you simply add your symptoms and choose between seeing a nurse practitioner or doctor. Soon you are escorted into a Diagnostic room where the nurse practitioner uses your Smart Card to read your medical history.

Your blood pressure is elevated. Your smart card records reveal that you have a history of high blood pressure but have discontinued your medications. You are prescribed 50 mg of Hyzaar, which is dispensed from the on-site pharmacy, and told to have your blood pressure checked the next day. The next morning on the way out of town, you pull into the Physicians Plus Drive-in Lab where a lab tech takes your blood pressure and records the information on your Smart Card. All without ever leaving your car. You depart for home with a sense of comfort that you were able to receive treatment with confidence and convenience.

Now imagine that this vision of the future of health care is not only possible but exists in Northwest Ohio and soon the entire nation.

[Abstract](#)

[Next](#)

Published by
The Academy
of Architecture
for Health

A Professional
Interest Area of The
American Institute
of Architects

The Academy Journal

[HOME](#) [CONTENTS](#) [ARCHIVES](#) [CALL FOR PAPERS](#)

Page 2 of 4

Findlay, Ohio (Population: 38,000) is not unlike most small communities in America. Primary care is first administered by a family practitioner who either treats or refers. That is if, of course, you are fortunate enough to have a family doctor. Those who are still waiting for an opening resort to the pharmacy for generic advice or in acute cases, the emergency room. And with the shortage of family doctors, those who are fortunate enough to be called "patient" must still wait for an appointment or again, in acute cases, visit the emergency room if they mistakenly fall ill after normal business hours.



[Figure 1](#). Exterior of Physicians Plus Urgent Care Center

The physician is now foreseen as a profit maker in lieu of care giver. And the emergency room, long reserved for acute care is now flooded with diagnostic cases. The situation results in frustration or worst; mistrust develops in the doctor/patient relationship.

As architects we have encouraged this environment by designing buildings which appeal to the needs of the physician over the needs of the patient.

Visit time efficiencies and rapid patient flow have produced medical offices that represent illness factories instead of health care centers. And the paying customers, the patients and their families have no choice but to tolerate a system that offers few alternatives.

In 1997, William E. Ruse, President of Blanchard Valley Health Association knew that the future of health care in his community was urgent care. By focusing non-emergent care into a more cost-effective environment, it was estimated that Physicians Plus would save the service area of the Health Association more than \$3 million per year.

More importantly, Ruse wanted to develop an urgent care system that would revolutionize the way health care is administered in his community and beyond. "We seek to provide a paperless health care delivery system where a person's individualized health access card can be used throughout our system; throughout the U.S.; and, early in the 21st century, throughout the world", states Ruse.

The challenge presented to Rooney Clinger Murray, Architects was to create a building that would reflect the concept in a strong and pure enough style so as to produce a recognizable motif for future Physicians Plus centers. Adaptable to different

Physicians Plus: A New Concept in Convenient Community Care

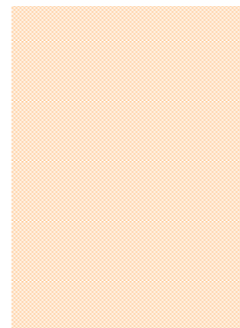
Published by
The Academy
of Architecture
for Health

A Professional
Interest Area of The
American Institute
of Architects

site configurations, the 14,000 square foot building is designed to function well as a stand alone facility, yet is long and narrow so that the same plan can be located on a 200 foot x 400 foot urban plot with on-site parking. During the design process, the architect/owner team focused on three primary concepts: convenience, clarity and control.

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)



The Academy Journal

HOME CONTENTS ARCHIVES CALL FOR PAPERS

Page 3 of 4

Convenience

Each Physicians Plus urgent care center recognizes that you are a busy person. The center is open for extended hours, seven days a week and appointments are not required.

Clients arriving at the facility first log personally into the data system using smart card technology. Online registration, a few billing questions and you are ready to select your treatment. Nurse practitioner or doctor? Pharmacy or therapy? Unsure, go on in and they'll take a look. A hostess who is stationed at the front desk will assist people uncomfortable with personal computers and a mouse. With the absence of appointments, the hostess is no longer a gatekeeper, but is free to accommodate a patient's questions and increase their sense of comfort.



[Figure 2.](#) Front lobby

Prompt access to services is a primary convenience criterion. Depending on your health care needs, services on-site include diagnostics and treatment, x-ray imaging, pharmacy, physical therapy and lab services including perhaps the most innovative concept in health care delivery today: drive-in blood draw and blood pressure services.

Pulling into a climate controlled lab in your vehicle, you are greeted by a hostess/phlebotomist who will take your blood pressure or complete the blood draw. A special cart that adjusts for various vehicle heights has been designed to assist the medical personnel with proper blood draw angles while registration/ billing is accommodated by a pull down touch screen at each station.

Clarity

The medical visit has traditionally been less than a healthy experience. Suffering physically, the patient is emotionally challenged with the stress of the unknown procedures, and known results, combined with an unknown sense of direction. The patient enters the bowels of the medical office or hospital, rapidly being prodded down the corridors for procedures. He is poked and patronized until he arrives miraculously in the same location. Where he is processed, paid up and pushed out, feeling the same physically, but lost emotionally.



[Figure 3.](#) Light-filled central atrium

Physicians Plus: A New Concept in Convenient Community Care

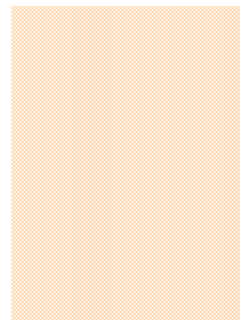
Published by
The Academy
of Architecture
for Health

A Professional
Interest Area of The
American Institute
of Architects

The central spine of a translucent ceiling gives the visitor to Physicians Plus a reference point. All functions emanate from this core and clients/staff are able to freely interact. There is a sense in the building of "I know where I am." Using such a roof also fills the space with a wonderful and healthy light.

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)



The Academy Journal

[HOME](#) [CONTENTS](#) [ARCHIVES](#) [CALL FOR PAPERS](#)

Page 4 of 4

Control

The essence of Physicians Plus as a building and as a concept is giving control of the delivery of health care to the patient. The desire is not to automate the practice of medicine, but to automate a patient's access to medicine. "Our computers will be able to provide patients with a wealth of health-related information, and take the tedium out of the registration process and repetitive tasks," emphasizes Ruse. "This will free our physicians and nurses to spend their time practicing medicine, not struggling with paperwork."

The keeper of the chart has traditionally controlled medical care. By allowing the patient to carry his personal medical history with him on a Smart Card, the Physicians Plus concept will empower the patient to control the type of service he receives, and when and where he chooses to receive it.

Regina Herzlinger, a professor at the Harvard Business School, summarizes what a Physicians Plus Urgent Care Center is all about. In a chapter entitled, "Give Me Mastery or Give Me Death: The New Health Care Activist," Professor Herzlinger writes:

"The success of businesses that provide customers with information, choices, and a sense of control - what I call mastery - is clear. From *Consumer Reports* to Home Depot, people want to control their fate. Does meeting this demand for mastery work in health care? You bet it does!"

Like a gleaming vessel of the future sitting in the fields north of Findlay, Ohio, Physicians Plus is more than a building. Physicians Plus is a concept which beckons clients to try a new way of receiving health care. The concept is simple: give a patient control and place them in an environment that encourages health through clarity and convenience. 🐼

[Previous](#)

[Contents](#)

Physicians Plus: A New Concept in Convenient Community Care

Published by
The Academy
of Architecture
for Health

A Professional
Interest Area of The
American Institute
of Architects

of the good reasons noted above for women's care groups to participate in these ten trends, the long term impact of these activities of increasing the value of the practices (if they are ever sold) is not lost on today's practicing physician.

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)



The Academy Journal

[HOME](#) [CONTENTS](#) [ARCHIVES](#) [CALL FOR PAPERS](#)



[Figure 1](#)
(11k)



[Figure 2](#)
(17k)



[Figure 3](#)
(25k)

Physicians Plus: A New Concept in Convenient Community Care

[Abstract](#)

Published by
The Academy
of Architecture
for Health

A Professional
Interest Area of The
American Institute
of Architects

The Academy Journal

[HOME](#) [CONTENTS](#) [ARCHIVES](#) [CALL FOR PAPERS](#)



Figure 1. The exterior of the Physicians Plus Urgent Care Center beacons clients to try a new way of receiving health care. Rooney, Clinger, Murray Architects. Photo supplied by W. Jerry Murray, AIA, NCARB.

Physicians Plus: A New Concept in Convenient Community Care

[Back to Photos](#)

[Back to Article](#)

Published by
The Academy
of Architecture
for Health

A Professional
Interest Area of The
American Institute
of Architects

The Academy Journal

[HOME](#) [CONTENTS](#) [ARCHIVES](#) [CALL FOR PAPERS](#)



Figure 2. Clients are greeted by a hostess in the front lobby and instructed in the use of Smart Card technology for self-registration. Rooney, Clinger, Murray Architects. Photo supplied by W. Jerry Murray, AIA, NCARB.

Physicians Plus: A New Concept in Convenient Community Care

[Back to Photos](#)

[Back to Article](#)

Published by
The Academy
of Architecture
for Health

A Professional
Interest Area of The
American Institute
of Architects

The Academy Journal

HOME CONTENTS ARCHIVES CALL FOR PAPERS



Figure 3. The central atrium is the unifying element of the center giving clarity and direction to clients and staff while filling the space with natural and healthy light. Rooney, Clinger, Murray Architects. Photo supplied by W. Jerry Murray, AIA, NCARB.

Physicians Plus: A New Concept in Convenient Community Care

[Back to Photos](#)

[Back to Article](#)

Published by
The Academy
of Architecture
for Health

A Professional
Interest Area of The
American Institute
of Architects

The Academy Journal is published by the AIA Academy of Architecture for Health (AAH). The Journal is the official publication of the AAH and explores subjects of interest to AIA-AAH members and to others involved in the fields of healthcare architecture, planning, design and construction. www.aia.org/aah

This article originally appeared in *The Academy Journal*, published by the AIA Academy of Architecture for Healthcare (volume 1, part 2 – July 1999).