Healthy Healthcare Design

Guidelines for designing mental health waiting room spaces in a post-pandemic world

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The Problem

Distancing efforts that slow the spread of disease put increased psychological strain on both students and faculty alike (Qiu et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020).

It is more important than ever to make people who are new to mental health counseling feel like they are entering a deinstitutionalized, homelike environment where they have autonomy and privacy, while also feeling connected and less alone (Ulrich et al., 2018, Carr, 2017, Devlin, 1992).

**Our Belief:** Pandemic-resilient design practices are not at odds with good design and that they can be strategically employed to create a comfortable, welcoming, and dignified environment.
# Evidence-based disease prevention measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease prevention measure</th>
<th>Positive impact on visitor experience</th>
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<tr>
<td>Physical glass partitions to prevent microbial transmission between workers and visitors at the welcome desk (Gan et al., 2020)</td>
<td>Increased sense of confidentiality (Watson et al., 2006, Carr, 2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed furniture at a safe 6' distance, moveable tables and stools for visitors in the same 'bubble'</td>
<td>Allows visitors the autonomy to opt-in or out of socialization, a sense of control (Ulrich, 1991)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wall-mounted air cleaner with a high-efficiency particulate arresting (HEPA) filter close to the ceiling near the reception desk (Anderson et al., 2007).</td>
<td>Sound masking conversation between receptionist and patient—promotes sense of privacy and reduces stress (Iyendo, 2016)</td>
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<td>Large openable windows allowing for improved air circulation</td>
<td>Abundant natural light, fresh air, and views of the outdoors (Brown et al., 2013)</td>
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<td>Vinyl upholstery with antimicrobial additives (Tierney, 2020)</td>
<td>Ease of cleaning, minimizes the need to use cleaners that produce noxious fumes</td>
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Evidence-based design strategies to promote relaxation

- Warm, natural color scheme that incorporates familiar patterns such as wood-grain finishes (Shepley et al., 2013).
- Positive distractions, such as plants, views of the outdoors, and reading materials (Ulrich, 1991).
- Cozy elements like comfortable chairs and soft pillows (Duque et al., 2019).
- Artwork depicting recognizable natural scenes (Brown et al., 2013, Ulrich).
- Copious natural light (Shepley et al.).
- Warm interior lighting (Spear, 2018).
- Intuitive space layout and wayfinding (Brown et al., 1997).
Design Precedents

Natural light
Indoor plants

Wood grain finishing
Terrazzo flooring

Diffuse overhead lighting
Warm wall lights

Nature artwork

Adjustable, comfortable furniture
Abstract Floor Plan

- Fixed Seating
- Tables + Desks
- Moveable Seating

Front Desk: Curved for desk space on both sides of glass dividers

Clear Sightlines to key destinations

Entrance

Door to Counseling

Reception Desk

Bathroom
Abstract Floor Plan

- Views of the Outdoors
- Floor-to-Ceiling Windows on two sides
- Approx. Location of Air Purifier ~8' off the floor
- Seating area out of view of entry way
- Bookshelf with reading materials (positive distractions)
Light, moveable stools intended for visitors with company in their personal 'bubble'.

Fixed, swivelable furniture allowing visitors to choose the direction they face and regulate their level of social interaction.

Clear glass dividers between receptionists and visitors, glazed glass between visitors.

Different seating areas allow for visitor to choose desired level of privacy.
Approx Location of HEPA Air Purifier
~8' off the floor

Air from window and vents diffuses potentially contaminated air

Intake and exhaust vents

Warm, Diffuse Lighting

Warm air from breath rises

View Upon Entrance

Nature art, plants, and views of outside
References:


