



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

This research explored patients' perceptions of waiting rooms that differed in how they were positioned relative to circulation routes.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Waiting areas should be separated from circulation paths through healthcare facilities.

Design of Circulation Axes in Densely Used Polyclinic Waiting Halls

Akalin-Baskaya, A., Yildirim, K.
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Key Concepts/Context

Waiting rooms in healthcare facilities can be positioned so that they abut circulation routes or so that people traveling through the facility move directly through them on their way to their final destinations. This research indicates that patients have the most positive perceptions of waiting areas positioned so that people traveling to other parts of the facility do not pass through them.

Methods

Outpatients waiting in one of three types of waiting rooms completed a questionnaire while they waited for medical treatment. Eighty patients in each sort of waiting room participated. In the first waiting room condition, people traveling to other destinations walked down a hallway parallel to the long wall of the rectangular waiting area. In the other two conditions, traveling people used a path directly through the waiting area with no waiting patients sitting in this flow of traffic (like a river passing through a field) or walked along a path through the waiting area that passed around and through waiting patients, as a river passes through countryside and around islands (patients) located in the middle of it.

Information was collected on demographics of the users and the frequency of their use of the clinic, etc., as well as user perceptions of the waiting areas. The various waiting rooms were assessed using the following terms: *roomy/cramped, brightness/darkness, fresh air/shortage of fresh air, peaceful/noisy, pleasant/depressing* on scales from 1 to 5, with higher numbers indicating a more negative response.



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Findings

Important findings:

- Patients perceived waiting areas significantly more positively when the waiting/seating area was separated from the travel route; this is the traveling along the edge of the rectangle condition noted previously. The waiting room separated from the circulation route was seen as most spacious, having more fresh air, more peaceful, and more pleasant, as well as brighter.
- Females were more critical than males about all of the aspects of the waiting areas.
- The island layout noted previously was perceived more positively than the no-islands configuration on all variables except brightness; both layouts were seen as equally bright.

Limitations

- Differences in materials used in the waiting areas may have influenced the data collected, particularly impressions of noise.