



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

To better understand how design can influence the use of outdoor spaces at pediatric health facilities in Texas.

Barriers to Garden Visitation in Children's Hospitals

Pasha, S. 2013 | *Health Environments Research and Design Journal Volume 6, Issue 4, Pages 76-90*

Key Concepts/Context

The Although researchers consistently recommend that certain design features be included in hospital healing gardens, such as comfortable seats and appropriate shade, these recommendations have not been rigorously linked to garden use.

Methods

Staff members, hospital visitors, and family members of patients completed a survey. Study participants took a survey from a box marked "Garden Study, Please Take One" at the entrances to gardens and in family rooms beside the gardens. Completed surveys were returned via boxes at the same locations. Data were collected at five outdoor spaces at three pediatric hospitals in Texas. Seventy staff members and 76 family members (this category includes hospital visitors) filled out at least part of the survey. Surveys were pre-tested with staff members and family members and customized for each location with an image of the garden being evaluated and the name of the hospital. Both English and Spanish versions of the survey were available.

Findings

Significant findings are reported here. Staff use of the gardens was negatively related to dissatisfaction with seat quality and poor shade. For family members, a negative relationship was found between poor shade and garden use. Staff visited the gardens to relax and family members visited to walk around and to let their children play. Nearly 60% of family member respondents said they never walked in the garden and 27% said they didn't visit the garden because they didn't know the garden existed (which seems odd, considering how surveys were distributed; perhaps the author meant to report that family members didn't visit the garden previously because they didn't know it existed at an earlier time). In addition, 25% of family members said that their child's medical condition impeded garden use,



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25% said they were too busy to visit the garden, and 15% said weather was the reason the garden wasn't visited. Among staff, 46% were too busy to visit the garden, 24% cited weather as a reason they didn't visit the garden, and 13% mentioned poor shade. Slightly fewer than half of staff and family members completed all questions related to satisfaction with the garden design. Different evaluations were given to shade and seating in various gardens. Responses to the open-ended questions indicated that family members were concerned about lack of play features, trees, flowers, and design details in the gardens studied.

Design Implications

The author provides multiple design implications including: provide views into the garden, access points, and signage, for example, to encourage garden use; create a "staff-only" garden. Since many people said they were too busy to use the garden, Pasha recommends the garden be integrated with spaces that are routinely visited such as waiting areas and cafeterias; include play features; create theme gardens such as meditation gardens or outdoor dining spaces; provide appropriate shade; and supply a variety of types of comfortable movable seats.

Limitations

Only five gardens were studied and all were in Texas, where weather is often hot.