GOING QUIET: Best Practices
An Executive Summary on Noise Reduction

INSIDE YOU WILL LEARN ABOUT:
How excessive noise can negatively impact patients and staff in hospital environments.

The various ways to improve patients’ perception of sound.

The specific low cost, medium cost, and high cost design strategies that can reduce noise.

This executive summary was created as a benefit for the Affiliate+ Program.
Going Quiet: Best Practices

March 2014

Executive Summary

In FY2014, organizations began receiving Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) reimbursement based on formulas established through the Value Base Purchasing (VBP) program and Total Performance Score (TPS). Thirty percent of the TPS is associated with the patient experience, as measured by the HCAHPS survey. According to the most recently published national results (Capachi, 2012; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2014), ‘How often was the area around patients’ rooms quiet at night?’ remains the lowest scoring component (a U.S. average of 61 percent reporting “always”) of the HCAHPS survey. As an underlying condition of the patient experience, noise can affect patient safety and patient health as well as staff satisfaction, health, productivity, and efficiency.

Noise is defined as an auditory stimulus that bears no informational relationship to the task at hand (United States Pharmacopeia (USP), 2010). Sound is a change in volume that has some informational relationship to the task at hand (Andringa & Lanser, 2013; Flynn et al., 1996).

There are numerous ways that facility design can mitigate noise and promote a quiet environment. Traditional metrics (such as average decibel levels) have been used to quantify the noise level in a facility, but it is also important to...
understand the perceptions of noise levels and sources. For example, sudden increases (peak noises) can have more of a disruptive effect than continuous elevated background noise levels. Interventions include noise source control, sound absorption, and noise blocking as well as sound masking and the provision of pleasant sounds and sound source information. As part of a multifactorial solution, the built environment should be considered as a means to supplement operations and behavior of the people occupying the facility.

References


