

The Nightingale Legacy: an historical perspective on contemporary patient-centered healthcare

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 35 years, the concept of patient-centered care has become central to discussions and critiques of the design and construction of healthcare facilities. A diversity of scholars, including historians, physicians, nurses, architects and designers have expressed concerns that current medical practice has lost its holistic, patient-centered focus. They insist that concentrating primarily on the patient's perspective will be critical in moving forward and creating effective therapeutic hospital environments. Such claims however are not exactly new - more than a century ago, Florence Nightingale promoted her own particular vision for patient-centered design. Her design principles incorporate a number of recommendations affecting the patient's physical environment, including recommendations on natural lighting, ventilation and the therapeutic value of indoor and natural views. Her principles endure today as a paragon for design professionals seeking to create innovative patient-centered environments conducive to healing.

This research proposes an historical framework for investigating the application of Nightingale's hospital design principles, focusing on a chronological exploration of the interior design features of select hospitals developed from the initial publication of her writings to today. Our work seeks to examine how the chosen hospital design approaches support, expand upon or negate Nightingale's principles. The study compares Nightingales' principles, as described in her writing with seminal and contemporary recommendations on health care facility design.

This research summarizes and integrates key historical and recent developments with rapidly evolving healthcare facilities in Arizona. Nightingale's principles are considered against a limited architectural literature published on the subject to date, and evaluated against a series of case studies of hospitals in Arizona between 1860 and 2000. The Arizona healthcare facilities include early infirmaries, sanatoria, and modern hospitals and their study involves scrutinizing plans, elevations, sections, photographs, renderings and related documents. A number of factors make Arizona a suitable location for examining the application of Nightingale's principles to hospital design, in particular, its natural environment and the growth pattern of the state. Historically, health-seekers have been coming to territorial infirmaries and sanatoria in Arizona since the late 1800s, where the desert air, sunshine and warm temperatures helped patients recover from illnesses such as tuberculosis, upper respiratory diseases, and arthritics. More recently, Arizona's unique growth pattern is placing increasing demands for new healthcare facilities. From July 2000 to July 2007, Maricopa County's population increased by an estimated 782,403 residents, or 25 percent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. As of mid 2007, nine new hospitals are reportedly planned for construction in Arizona, with expansion or renovations intended at 23 hospitals over the next five years.

Our research provides several key contributions: 1) it reveals the importance of Nightingale's principles in revolutionizing the design of the built environment within hospital settings, 2) structures an historical narrative that includes the application of Nightingale's principles to hospital interior design, 3) provides knowledge of the past — reemphasizing interior versus architectural design— for designers to make informed decisions for the future, and 4) it contributes to the documentation and explication of Arizona's history in the healthcare environment.

KEYWORDS

History, Design, Theory, Florence Nightingale, Patient-centered