

Limiting noise to support a healing environment

By Ann Geissler Timme, Allegion

As healthcare evolves in the 21st century, the emphasis continues to be focused on treating the patient as much as their condition(s). Providers not only have to ensure their patients receive the correct medical treatment, but they also have to care for their patients' overall wellbeing: stress levels, comfort and mental health. This becomes more challenging as healthcare costs rise, the clinician shortage looms and overcrowding remains a predominant environmental concern.

Although some hospitals have facilities that allow for healthcare providers to work closely with their patients and loved ones, not every healthcare system has the budget to build a new facility or wing that is totally patient-centric. But what most healthcare systems can focus on is improving their environmental conditions. One of the most effective ways to do this is to focus on reducing noise.

Recently, healthcare organizations have been working on limiting the level of noises within their facilities and begun to form working groups to find and eliminate unnecessary noise pollution. Studies have shown that noise levels in hospitals can rise to over 100dbs*. By implementing effective noise-reducing solutions, healthcare providers can help create an environment that is more peaceful, healing and conducive to the wellbeing of their inhabitants.

How patients and visitors benefit from quiet

Noise levels can be among the top complaints registered by patients. To put 100dbs into perspective, 95 db is about the sound a typical motorcycle makes. Environmental noise at such levels can augment stress, anxiety and aggravation among patients and leave them feeling less satisfied about their experience at your facility.

Friends and loved ones of patients also suffer from the effects of loud decibel levels in a healing environment. The stress of a visitor can be transferred to the patient and affect healing.

Caregivers also benefit from reduced noise

A quieter healing environment also benefits healthcare staff and personnel. Reducing the noise from pagers, public

address systems, medical equipment and even doors opening and closing can result in reduced stress, which can lead to improved sensory perception. And with improved sensory perception, a healthcare giver can better tend to patients' needs.

Environmental points of emphasis

By intent, healing environments are meant to be quiet. In practice, the long halls, alarming medical equipment, and flat, hard surfaces become echo chambers for ambient noise.

Healthcare facilities are becoming proactive in developing strategies and campaigns to keep overall decibel levels down. Studies from facilities such as Stanford Hospital and Mayo Clinic have shown that hospitals that commit to reduced paging and PA usage, having low-volume conversations, and shutting off equipment when not in use have helped contribute to decreased volume levels.

Another viable cost-effective solutions healthcare facilities can use to limit noise in their healing environment is with structural upgrades. By replacing structures such as doors and door hardware, cabinets and latches with improved models that can remain quiet after repeated use, noise pollution can be reduced down to levels acceptable by the EPA. Structural changes such as noise reducing equipment are not only efficient but also cost effective, helping to contribute to a noise pollution-free environment for years to come.

Allegion offers a number of 'quiet solutions' such as specially designed exit devices that are almost undetectable when in use and a vertical cable system that replaces the rattling metal rods of a traditional vertical rod system. We can use our solutions and expertise to help you assess your current situation and develop a migration strategy for implementing quieter door hardware throughout your hospital in a manner that fits your building's needs and your budget.

*source: CBSNews.com

Learn more about quiet solutions

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