

How Evidence-Based Design Is Revolutionizing the Healthcare Industry

In 1984, Roger Ulrich published a study that detailed a strong positive correlation between hospital room windows and patient recovery times. His results found that surgery patients staying in windowed rooms typically recovered faster than those staying in those without windows.¹ This news was groundbreaking in the healthcare industry; it taught us that it was possible to improve patient wellness and experience in a way that had never been thought of before.

Flash forward thirty years, where Ulrich's original research has revolutionized design and architecture. This new model is called **evidence-based design**. Though we may not all be scientists at heart, using this design plan is proving beneficial in structures across the globe – from hospitals and schools, all the way to landscaping.

The research that has built upon Ulrich's has been even more promising. Appealing healthcare environments are shown to have positive effects on not just the patients, but their families and the staff as well. Well-lit, aesthetically pleasing patient rooms can reduce infection and falls, increase employee productivity and guest satisfaction, save thousands of dollars, and **improve people's lives** in the process.²

While working within this scope, it is important to remember a few key things: Aside from aesthetics, **functionality** must also be considered. For example, when designing our **forWard® hospital headwalls** we made sure to maintain the same level of

ease that a typical hospital room provides for its staff, while adding an extra level of comfort and attractiveness for the patients and their guests. Bringing some natural light into a patient room is another simple, yet effective use of evidence-based design, and it does not compromise the amount of space or accessibility within the room.

We now have the opportunity to combine creativity and design with innovation and research. We are no longer furnishing spaces, we are **creating atmospheres**. Even so much as the orientation of a sink or placement of a headwall in a hospital room can lead to advancements in health, safety, and quality of care.



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Ulrich's research taught us the importance of our environment and the thought we put into creating it. It established our ability to improve the performance of an institution, the well-being of those we care about, and the way we look at design; it gave us evidence of what we can do to succeed in doing so. Evidence-based design shows us that all it takes to make a positive impact is to think differently, design thoughtfully, and create progressively.

Evidence-based design has presented us a **window of opportunity** with a bright view of what the future can look like. Now, all we need to do is open it.

1. Ulrich, R. S. (1984-04-27). "View through a window may influence recovery from surgery". *Science*. 224 (4647): 420-21.

2. Cama, Rosalyn (2009). *Evidence-based healthcare design*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. ISBN 9780470149423.