



The Healing Environment in Blended Medicine at North Hawaii Community Hospital

Introduction

We use the best of high-tech and the best of high-touch, those that have been proven effective.

Design and layout of the physical plant were thoughtfully planned, according to important principles of physics, in alignment with cultural wisdom.

Consultants were used from both of these spheres, and we ended up with “blended medicine.”

The environment is the third and integral part of the model of blended medicine.

Science (high tech) has much to teach us about healing environments.

Cultural wisdom (high touch) and the aloha spirit are also important elements. We also used feng shui.

Lōkahi is the balance of body, mind, spirit, nature and community. These all must be addressed for a total healing environment

We have blended these principles of physics and cultural wisdom with our architecture and design to create a total healing environment at NHCH.

What You Can See

1. Wide hallways so we don't trigger the “fight or flight” phenomenon — most hospitals do not use wide hallways.

2. Windows and skylights all over to keep people, including patients, in sync with the sun according to principles of chronobiology.

3. Fluorescent lights use the 30,000 cycle electronic ballasts way above “flicker fusion”

rates for people (vs. the 60 cycle lights that flicker 120 times per second and can make people sick).

4. Color of the lights is also important and we use different shades in different areas.

What You Can't See

5. Power cables are buried deeper than Code required reducing harmful effects of EMF's.

6. Clean mountain air moves throughout the hospital as we're able to open the doors and windows during the day.

7. HEPA filters circulate the air at night.

8. Special water filtration system for clean water.



Cultural Wisdom — Lōkahi

Lōkahi is the balance and harmony of body, mind, spirit, nature & community.

These five aspects are inspired by the wisdom of the five mountains that surround and inspire us all — spiritual icons.

BODY

9. The “body” of the hospital (physical plant) is designed as a healing instrument (vs. many hospitals which are likened to “warehouses” or “prisons” for sick bodies rather than places for people to be cared for or to heal).

10. Location, footprint, floor plan and spatial relationships are all important for movement of patients and operational efficiency, we well as for future expansions.

11. Waimea is centrally located and accessible within the golden hour for all the people in North Hawai'i.

12. Serene landscapes with rainbows hovering over lush green misty foothills, streams and waterfalls, animals grazing in pastures, and sometimes snow-capped mountains.

13. Waimea feels “like home” or “spiritual.”

14. Makahikilua (the land the hospital is on) was a gathering place for Ancient Hawaiians, as early as 700 AD. Peace was celebrated there during the Makahiki season which is the time each year between October and January.

15. Alignment — the footprint of the hospital aligns the front of the building with Kohala Mountain, and the back with Mauna Kea.

16. “Not Just Another Hospital” was used as our tagline in our early advertising.

17. Decisions are made based on the philosophy of patient-centered care. We ask “what is best for the patient?”

18. Patient respect and privacy. Rooms are designed so that a person walking by cannot see the patients' faces through the door as they lie in bed, but the patients can see the door. This is an important principle of feng shui.

19. Windows to see outdoors — the view is so important to the sick patient. It is important for them to keep their connection to the land or 'aina and to the community.

20. Sleep chairs or extra beds are available for guests to stay overnight and there are no limits on the number of visitors or visiting hours

21. Primary nursing model was used to plan nurses' desks. Lowered visual barrier, surrounded by 7 or 8 patient rooms.

22. Commitment to “green.” Recycling, environmentally friendly construction materials and non-toxic cleaning substances, dangers of poly vinyl chlorides, and risks of medical waste management.

MIND

We know the importance of the mind's influence on our health status, and we understand how environmental elements affect our emotional well being, comfort levels, feelings of safety, privacy, and respect.

23. Lobby (first impression) is open with windows and sunlight so that people have the connection to the 'aina.

24. Volunteers welcome with “aloha” introducing our culture of caring, and sharing of spirit (honi).

25. Feng shui principles used as they relate to color, textures, materials, and spatial relationships.

26. Warm colors and carpeting on the floors for warmth (Waimea's cool climate).

27. Familiar patterns / textures in wallpaper, carpeting, and furniture coverings (our people are familiar with weaving patterns, or plant patterns).

28. Open feeling in patient rooms. Doors can be unlocked and kept open during the day.

29. Healing art is culturally and historically meaningful.

30. Changeable art in patient rooms.

31. CARE Channel 2 on all TV's in patient rooms and wait areas soothing nature video with background music specially designed without lyrics, tunes, or distinct rhythms that may bring back bad memories.

32. Noise reduction. Less overhead paging. Carpeted hallways.

33. Complementary healing modalities available (educational video in each patient room). Acupuncture, chiropractic, naturopathy, massage therapy, guided imagery and healing touch.

34. Healing Services staff visits each patient to introduce these concepts. Over 50% of all patients receive Healing Touch at any given time.

35. Humor — Laughter is the best medicine” and is important in a healing environment.

SPIRIT

We know the importance of the intangible, of faith, and of honoring our past and the Hawaiian host culture. We know we must also honor each individual's basic human dignity and personal spiritual practices.

At NHCH, we have created the space for the spirit of aloha to thrive and warm our hearts.

36. Spiritual icons. We honor the spiritual wisdom of our many cultures, eg. the five mountains, Buddha statue, Quan Yin Chinese Goddess of healing, Jesus with children painting, and Hawaiian cultural art.

mind

spirit

37. Ti plants at all entrances and corners of the building to “filter out the bad spiritual energy.”

38. Bamboo garden dedicated to the bamboo (‘ohe) plant, which is the overall spiritual protective plant for our hospital, as advised by the late Papa Henry Auwae. Bamboo is representative of bones and bodily strength.

39. Hale Mana’olana (House of Hope), the chapel, is a quiet place, open to nature, physically separated from the bldg by a corridor, not “buried” within the building. Multi-purpose, eg. grieving, weddings, solitude, many spontaneous prayer meetings.

40. “Patient Lavender” for prayer or sending healing intention. Used instead of “Code” as in Code Red or Code Blue, since the word “code” can provoke a sense of urgency or emergency with the hospital staff.

41. Diverse spiritual practices of our patients, families and staff are honored. Religious scriptures and books available in the chapel for the main 14 religions in our area.

42. Oshibori service takes place each morning. Warm, moist towels using aromatherapy are passed to staff going off the night shift from the ER, birthing unit or med surg, and occasionally to patients and families

43. Healing intention is used in food services. Dietary staff are told that they can put aloha into the food during preparation, and they are encouraged not to prepare food if they’re upset.

44. Most of our staff are trained in the aloha spirit. All staff, including housekeepers, food service, engineering, and accounting, consider themselves part of the healing team.

45. Vision Statement, is “to be the most healing hospital in the world.”

NATURE

We are always reminded of the healing forces of creation, the beauty of nature that surrounds us, and the patterns of life that embrace and support our existence.

For our local people, nature is a powerful healer, and their daily lives and spiritual and religious practices are closely interwoven with nature’s rhythms and patterns.

46. Views of nature and the outdoors. There are no visual barriers between the patients and the outdoors. No typical views of parking lots or brick walls.

47. Mountains are the source of spiritual strength for most of us.

Pastures with cattle, horses, and sheep, and nature’s many patterns of life remind us of home, and of “life going on” out there.

48. Windows and doors that open to the outdoors result in NO “hospital” smell. Housekeepers are meticulous.

49. Aromatherapy used in house-keeping practices and in some patient care areas, eg. family birthing.

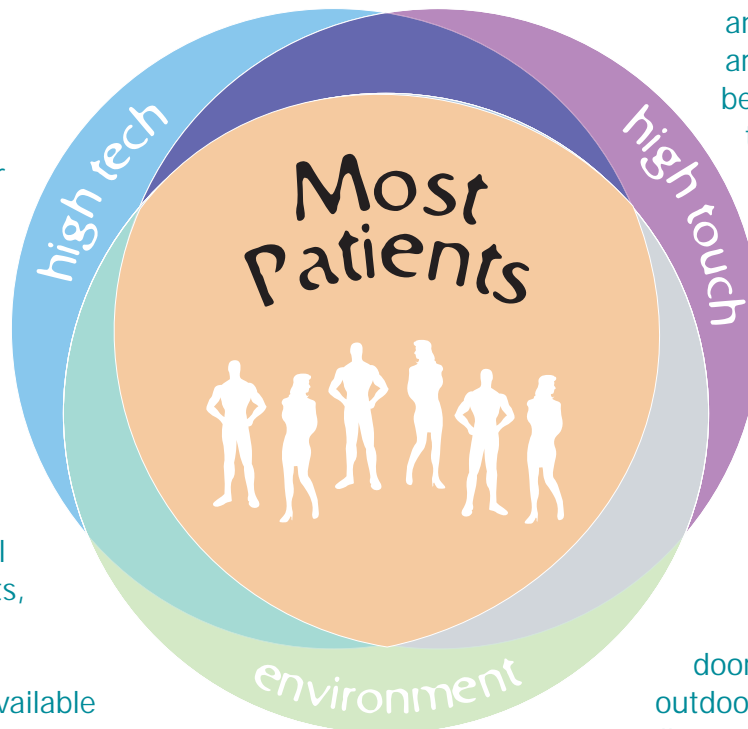
50. Approved three essential oils for patient care: lavender, peppermint and grapefruit.

51. Hawaiian medicinal plants used as an overall guiding design theme, as advised by the late Papa Henry Auwae, kahuna pookela la` au lapa` au (Hawaiian herbal medicine).

52. Papa Henry, who passed away a few years ago at age 95, was a dear friend and cultural guide. He taught in healing, 80% of the success is a result of spirituality, and 20% is a result of medicine.

nature

Blended Medicine



53. NHCH logo is noni (Indian Mulberry) plant, which was a Hawaiian "cure-all".

54. Some herbal supplements and homeopathics are included on the formulary in the pharmacy. Patients bring their own herbal remedies to use with permission from their doctors.

55. Healing Garden landscapes with flowers, trees, water features.

56. Maluhia Labyrinth Garden dedicated to peace and meditation, paved with ceramic tiles designed with Hawaiian nature elements, each one expressing a message of remembrance, love, or peace.

COMMUNITY

Community teaches us about the importance of accountability, self determination, and our relationships with ourselves, our families, our cultures and our neighbors — what ties us all together.

Prior to the hospital being built in Waimea, patients had to travel long distances on our Big Island or to Honolulu for their care.

57. Patient rooms are over-sized to allow the family to be there. The birthing rooms are particularly large for our larger families.

58. Waiting rooms are called 'ohana rooms. Ohana means family.

59. 'Ohana Room with a kitchenette, TV, piano, and couches for families to rest, prepare special meals, or even play some of their own music.

60. Suzanne's Corner is a small room for quiet contemplation, or for doctors / nurses to talk with families, instead of in the corridors.

61. Celebration of Life meal served to each "new family" when a baby is born in our Family Birthing Unit, complete with special menu, "candle-light", and non-alcoholic champagne.

62. Free conference space for community meetings.

63. "Not Just More Hospital Food". The Café is so popular that people come from all over

town to have their meals there and the Nutritional Services Dept. caters parties, meetings, and events.

64. Many community programs. These include an Artist in Residence program, celebrity presentations, labyrinth walks, community health education and health fairs for children and seniors, and interesting blended CME offerings.

65. Prayer Blankets. Blankets are sewn by hospital volunteers, blessed by community religious leaders, and distributed to patients.

66. Pet Therapy. Specially screened dogs are brought into the hospital to visit patients and staff — often lifting "spirits" of those visited.

PROCESS

How did we get to this? We listened to our community, and we researched the best science had to offer.

We did things right for the local people — we did the right things for our patients.

We continue to honor our cultural traditions such as the practice of "honi" which is to exchange breath and share your spirit.

There are many measures of success. We have high pt. satisfaction. People from other locations on our island choose to come to our hospital, and then they choose to come back.

We've had people from around our State and even from Japan who chose our hospital for their care.

JCAHO, the national healthcare quality expert, has acknowledged our innovation and leadership.

In Conclusion

Even though "Iōkahi" may be a specific Hawaiian concept that has deep meaning for our people here, it is the idea of reconnecting with one's cultural wisdom that is a vital key to the healing process.

Reconnecting to cultural wisdom can happen in urban inner cities, heartland farming communities, or any neighborhood anywhere.

These are notes from Earl Bakken's presentation to the American College of Cardiology at their meeting on Integrated Medicine in October 2003 at the Mauna Lani Resort, Hawaii Island.

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