

Homely Environment at the Hospital – Mission Possible at SingHealth Community Hospitals

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Aim

While the home space within a hospital is contradictory of the usual understanding of hospitals as specialised illness spaces belonging to the domain of health professionals, and interlaced with concerns such as infection control and long-term maintenance of furniture and fittings within hospital wards, care philosophies are undoubtedly moving towards pathogenic to salutogenic. With an average length of stay of 21 days and as the “last-mile” before most elderly patients return home or to the community, the Community Hospital sees it as its duty to provide a homely environment that meets infection control and ergonomical requirements.

Methodology

A calibrated form of design-thinking method was used to first understand users, i.e. elderly patients and their caregivers, and through that, teams ideated and came out with various prototype designs based on the users’ point of view. Through a collaborative process that involved individuals in a multi-disciplinary team – including nurses, infection control specialists, interior designers and architects trained in hospital facility design, occupational therapists, and staff in environmental services, respective professionals evaluated prototypes by putting forth concerns from their area of expertise, resulting in carefully curated furniture pieces in various design themes that provided a homely environment for patients.



Internal stakeholder engagement in the curation of furniture themes

Result

Instead of prototyping the furniture that would lead to considerable costs, ideas were implemented in phases across hospital wards and through various themes such as nature, vintage and minimalist aesthetic. Procurement was also cost-effective due to natural economies of scale across hospital sites under SingHealth Community Hospitals.



Various furniture themes currently utilised at Sengkang Community Hospital, intended for adoption across other SCH sites

Conclusion

The creation of a homely environment that is at the same time, robust in the dimensions of aesthetics, infection control, ergonomics and maintenance, can be done so only through a passionate, collaborative team that pushes for holistic excellence yet at the same time, respectful of each other’s expertise.

