

# Interiors

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## Living space

Bathrooms break out of the mould



### Healing touch

Latest from the world of healthcare



### Colour trends

Inspired by the colours of Arabia



### Eternal charm

Inside the new St Regis Doha



# Designed to heal

Interior design of medical environs has become a key differentiator in today's competitive healthcare business, says SAEED ZAKI

**Modern & spacious:**  
Bumrungrad International  
Hospital in Bangkok

The interior design of healthcare facilities, particularly of hospitals, is no longer a mere technical and logistical exercise. In the wake of the increasingly marked trend towards medical tourism, meaning patients travel specifically for medical, albeit health or cosmetic, attention, designing such environs has become a key differentiator in today's competitive healthcare business, vying for a slice of the 'global patient' pie.

Medical tourism, amply and significantly catered

to by healthcare facilities across Asia, is attracting large numbers of patients requiring expensive treatment and care, whether lifesaving or for vanity's sake. The reasons are varied, including lack of availability of the required treatment in a patient's own country, better affordability or higher level of expertise in the destination country, or simply an add-on to holiday.

This has thrown down a major challenge to the design professionals, who are engaged in the interior



design of healthcare environments. Designers are required not only to cater to the technical needs of the hospital or clinic, but also to the specific cultural and religious diversity and needs of the global patient, whether originating from the East, Middle East or West. To add to the complexity, the role of interior design has gained further importance in the development of healthcare facilities on the back of research suggesting that a carefully designed environment enhances a patient's recovery.

Finally, technological advancement in itself furthermore dictates that designers must also integrate machinery, gadgets and devices within the facility design, without making them an overbearing feature for the users, staff and patients alike.

Global patient needs differ significantly, due to cultural diversity, ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs. The customs and norms of one cultural heritage may well vary vastly and contrastively from

**Enhancing environment:**  
Healthcare facilities of today portray the look and feel of a hotel

## [ HEALTHCARE & MEDICAL FACILITIES ]

another. Therefore, the healthcare facilities of today increasingly portray the look and feel of the hospitality industry.

### METICULOUS PLANNING

Successful hospitals, nowadays, look more like hotels with clean, crisp, well-designed lobby areas, attractive and diverse food and beverages outlets, luxurious waiting spaces, well-lit and stylishly-designed corridors, and more importantly modern, spacious and inviting consulting and patient rooms.

Entering the main lobby area of a modern hospital, these days, equates to entering the lobby of a hotel.

Several hospitals recently designed by dwp |

design worldwide partnership, including the famous Bumrungrad International Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, Seven Hills Hospital in Mumbai, India, and Sime Darby Medical Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, reflect this most vividly. The selection and application of colours, art and furniture have been completed with a taste of hospitality and meticulous consideration of clinical hospital environment needs, bringing about an overall ambience that has set a new design trend in the healthcare sector.

Consulting rooms are designed to look like modern offices, with the integration of technology and gadgets, discreetly but readily available. Patient rooms are created similarly to hotel guestrooms,

**Stylish design:**  
Bumrungrad Atrium Building (below) and a consultation room at Sime Darby Medical Centre in Kuala Lumpur



with all of the necessary amenities to make the patient's stay in hospital as comfortable as possible. One of the key changes in patient rooms is the headboard design. Traditionally, the wall behind the patient's bed is littered with medical equipment and gadgets, serving as a constant reminder of the patient's reason for being there. By designing this element intentionally, to hide those devices within a panel, not only makes the room look cleaner, but has also been shown to reduce patient stress levels. A discreet bedside control panel to control light, television, DVD players, air-conditioners, curtains, nurse-call, further improves the patient experience.

Addressing cultural concerns, the hospital needs

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**A taste of hospitality:**  
Seven Hills Hospital in  
Mumbai (below) and  
SDMC atrium lounge  
atrium





## Regional experience

The regional managing director of dwp (design world partnership), Saeed Zaki has over two decades of extensive experience in property and real estate development. An architect, urban designer and planner by trade, he has proven track record of successful project planning design, development and implementation, throughout Asia.



to provision facilities, such as food and beverages outlets that respect various dietary requirements, prayer rooms for different religions, relaxation area options, some sizeable enough for overseas patients travelling with a large entourage, and equally important counselling rooms for out-patients.

## ARTWORKS

The use of art and artworks in healthcare is another environment enhancing element. Based on research findings, it has been shown that appropriate art further aids in creating a relaxing environment conducive to healing and reduced stress for patients and visitors. Various areas of the hospital

benefit from careful art selection of and purposeful interior décor.

The application of colour is another aspect in the hospital design that requires exacting consideration, since colour can influence mental and emotional user behavior, which in the healthcare arenas is crucial. Designers now look to research, when selecting suitable colours for various areas. Colour is represented not just in paint used, but also as an inherent property of selected material and finishes, which when correctly combined can facilitate navigation, reduces stress and augment a sense of confidence, safety and well-being. For example, pink is said to bring about greater physical strength and a



positive mood in children, cool colours promote relaxation, sleep and calmer activities, warm colours invigorate strength and physical activity, and neutral colours minimise attention.

### SUSTAINABILITY

In addition, colour application can also help energy-saving, with bright and reflective colours in public areas of the hospital. This is also an important consideration, when designing environmentally sustainable healthcare environments. In the same vein, paints used in hospitals should also be prudently specified to withstand the intense cleaning and scrubbing that a hospital has to undergo.

Given the very nature of healthcare facilities, paints should be made from non-harmful materials, containing low volatile organic compound (VOC) and that will not become a breeding ground for bacteria and disease.

Improving the healthcare user experience is pivotal for desired results in patient care, and the above need to be taken into consideration and examined carefully every time. This has led to the interior design of hospitals and clinic becoming a highly specialised area, with a strong emphasis on creating a lifestyle-oriented wellness environment that caters to the requirements of global patients, seeking extraordinary care.

**Hospital trends:** Clean, crisp, well-designed lobby areas and modern and spacious patient rooms