This Well-Designed Hospital Room May Help You Feel Better Faster

August 26, 2014

Imagine falling ill and getting a private room in the hospital with a huge window, a pullout couch for guests and a flat-screen TV. Then toss in these perks: Your own easy-access bathroom and the ability to see everything that your doctors and nurses are doing to take care of you. These accommodations are included in a newly designed $523 million, 636,000-square-foot hospital at Princeton University, and findings show this kind of patient comfort can boost a hospital's health care outcomes, The New York Times reports.

Before building the new hospital and while at an old site, management set up a mock patient room that incorporated new design ideas. Over time, they placed some patients (most were recovering from hip and knee replacement surgeries) in their re-vamped, re-designed room, while others stayed in the older rooms. All the patients received the same care and were asked to rate the hospital services.

The results? Patients in the remodeled hospital room rated their food and nursing care as far superior when compared with the ratings of patients in the older rooms. What's more, patients in the new rooms asked for 30 percent less pain medication, which, in the end, led to shorter hospital stays.

As a result, the design ideas were incorporated in the new hospital.

"If there's a building that can save 2 percent on the cost of delivering health care, that's huge," said Christopher Korsh, the lead architect for the Princeton project, who worked closely with doctors and nurses at Princeton for several years before building the new health care behemoth. "Plus, good design really can make you better faster."

But unlike clinical trials for drugs, it's very difficult for doctors to get precise, unbiased data on how much a room's design really improves patient care. Critics say such a huge financial investment is unthinkable without conclusive, rather than anecdotal, evidence that it works.

Did you know that service animals may also be able to help patients heal faster and feel better at the hospital? Click here for more information.

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