TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE, ONE MUST STUDY; BUT TO ACQUIRE WISDOM, ONE MUST OBSERVE. – Marilyn vos Savant
Let’s think about the exam room from the caregiver’s perspective. It’s more than just a room for examining a patient. The exam room is a listening room, a consulting room, an education room, a treatment room and a room that needs to comfort and soothe. Its primary function is to support the doctor-patient relationship, but it often also needs to support partners in care. It is a room with many different functions serving people with very different needs.

The exam room must accommodate all. All shapes. All sizes. All ages. It should accommodate a patient’s personal belongings and support their education. It should provide caregivers access to the things they need to help a patient heal. It should support caregivers with the tools they need to educate patients and partners in care. The exam room should also be welcoming to partners in care by providing ample room for their supportive role. It must be thoughtfully designed keeping in mind all who use the space.
UNDERSTAND

How do you come to understand the needs of those who use an exam room? Most of us have experienced an exam room so we have a good idea of what it’s like. But think of it from a caregiver’s perspective. Observation is at the heart of our understanding. Our researchers focus on ethnographic research. Take Dr. Harrel, for example, who works at a small clinic. This is his story.

{A space should be designed, not by what it’s used for, but by how we use it.}

“My day is filled with patients of all shapes and sizes with a great variety of symptoms and diseases. Exam space is really limited. Patients sit in a hard wooden chair for most of their appointment. If they need to disrobe, there’s no place for them to put their clothing. There’s almost no room for their family to accompany them. And when I share information with patients, they need to look over my shoulder on to my computer screen.”

Accounts like Dr. Harrel’s, and hundreds of others, aid in our attempt to understand the expectations placed on the exam room. More importantly, these stories further the understanding of the user’s needs within their environment.

COMMUNICATION

CAREGIVER EXPLAINS
TREATMENT OPTIONS
ACROSS A DESK,
CREATING A BARRIER
BETWEEN PATIENT
AND HIMSELF.

ACCOMMODATE

SPACE IS DESIGNED FOR
PATIENT AND CAREGIVER, WHEN
A PARTNER IN CARE IS IN
THE ROOM THE SPACE SEEMS
OVERCROWDED/awkward.
OBSERVE

SEEN THROUGH THE RESEARCHER’S PERSPECTIVE.

CONTROL

FURNITURE IS FIXED IN THE SPACE, FORCING PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS TO WORK AROUND IT, NOT WITH IT.

PRIVACY

NO PLACE TO CHANGE INTO HOSPITAL GOWN.
NO PRIVACY CURTAIN OR PLACE TO STORE PERSONAL BELONGINGS.

COMFORT

PATIENT HAS NOTHING TO DO OTHER THAN WAIT. MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS CAN INTIMIDATE PATIENTS OF ALL AGES.

TECHNOLOGY

TECHNOLOGY HAS FOUND ITS WAY INTO THE EXAM ROOM. THERE ISN’T ADEQUATE SPACE OR SUPPORT.
SYNTHESIZE

PROCESS
After returning from the field, researchers and designers work together to turn observations into insights. Insights to ideas. And ideas to reality.

FLEXIBILITY
By using modular options and mobile technology, the exam room can continue to adapt to the changing needs of users and space.

STRESS REDUCTION
By accounting for the partners in care in the environment, patients can feel comfortable knowing that their loved ones are with them.
COMFORT
Including ample storage creates a clutter-free environment where everything has its place.

TECHNOLOGY
Implementing flexible solutions that accept new and emerging technology promotes the transfer of knowledge between caregivers, patients and partners in care.

PRIVACY
Help reduce anxiety of patients by providing considerate elements such as cubical curtains.

REALIZE
Let’s build it. Creating an exam room that accommodates all the different uses and users means, at some point, going from ideas to paper to prototype. And this is that point. Together, we build the space and put it to work in a real world setting. Then take a close look at how specific products perform, how specific users interact with the environment and how specific product solutions can bridge the gap between needs and wants.

An exam room needs to:

- Offer flexible solutions to accommodate different patients
- Provide convenient storage for caregivers and patients
- Feature collaborative spaces instilling a team atmosphere
- Account for partners in care
- Use modular options to adapt to changing needs
- Promote and provide tools for the transfer of knowledge

CAREGIVER

How does a doctor use the space? Does the space support the exam process, consultation, education? Does it help relax the patient? Is it easily organized? Is it comfortable for partners in care? Does it allow caregivers to treat the patient without creating additional stress?

In an exam room, caregivers need:
- Easy access to technology
- The ability to share information with patients and partners in care with ease
- Adequate space for all who may be using the room at any given moment
- Convenient, easy-to-access storage

SHARELINK™ 8

Perfect for the exam room, ShareLink 8 allows caregivers to quickly and unobtrusively capture and access information, as well as share information with patients without making them crowd around a display screen. In other words, ShareLink 8 adjusts to caregivers and patients. Not the other way around.
BUSINESS IMPLICATIONS
With minimal square footage available for exam rooms it’s especially important to make them as efficient as possible. Does the room design support the entire exam process, maximize throughput, anticipate the next wave of technology and minimize the future cost of space change?

SAFETY & REGULATIONS
Waste management is a big factor to consider in the exam room. Is there a secure, dedicated place to put used robes, dressings and instruments? What about patient confidentiality? Are HIPAA guidelines being taken into consideration? Does the room adequately provide for a person in a wheelchair? Is infection control being adequately addressed?

EXPERIENCE
A patient feels the most vulnerable in an exam room. Anxiety and insecurity can be compounded by the room’s aesthetics. Is the room temperature adequate? Does the décor include pleasant things to look at, from fabrics and wall art, to medical information that may be of interest? Is there a private place to undress? Is the process set up to decrease a patient’s waiting time? All these things and more help create a positive exam room experience.

TECHNOLOGY
From integration of lab imaging, to viewing electronic medical records and patient education, considering technology at every turn can make the exam room more productive and more efficient. Is remote monitoring a key process? If so, has the space been designed to support remote communication with patients? When planning these spaces we continue to think not only about today, but tomorrow, too.

MEASURE
When so much is invested into an effort, it is natural to want to make sure that what you are doing is working. That’s why evidence-based design is taking a front-and-center position in almost everything we do. And as its role evolves, so does the concept of measurement.

Our toolkit of qualitative and quantitative approaches include the disciplines of anthropology, environmental psychology and sociology. Measurement happens in natural work settings, simulation exercises and controlled randomized trials. We use surveys, interviews, behavioral and workflow analyses, time-motion studies and productivity studies.

No matter the approach, we are drawing from – and adding to – a wealth of valuable knowledge. And are continuing to work towards environments that best promote healing.

In an exam room, consider:
• Patient comprehension
• Impact of technology
• Patient and physician satisfaction
• Patient room cycle time
PLANNING IDEAS

From research to realization, it’s time to create. Here are a few planning ideas, thought starters and plans to inspire your next project.

PRODUCTS FEATURED
Move™ Seating
Opus™ Casegoods
Sorrel™ Bariatric Seating
Verge™ Stool

PRODUCTS FEATURED
Opus Casegoods
ShareLink 8
Sorrel Bariatric Seating
Criterion® Seating
PRODUCTS FEATURED
InfoLink™ 5
Outlook™ Sequoia™ Seating
Verge Stool

PRODUCTS FEATURED
Cesar™ Casegoods
ShareLink 8
Sorrel Seating
Verge Stool
THE 30-YEAR PLAN

Think back 30 years. Many of the healthcare facilities in this country were built even longer ago – in the fifties and sixties. And many of these facilities haven’t changed. Even though much about healthcare and the way it’s delivered has.

So here we stand, once again trying to predict a future of healthcare 30 years from now. Not only do we need to predict this uncharted territory, we need to plan for it. Mentally, physically and spatially. Growth and change are inevitable. And there are no crystal balls. So this anticipated change demands flexibility.

While we know we can never predict the future, we understand the need to create spaces that enable ways of healing that are flexible, and anticipate growth and change over time. This is not only to achieve caregiver’s efficiency, but to manage the experience of patients and partners in care.

Our goals are not unattainable. Or outlandish. They are to improve on the intangibles. To improve the delivery of care. And at the heart of all of this, to promote healing and help patients get better faster.

This is why we do it. And we know this is why you do it too. Together we can make the difference today, tomorrow and for the next generations.

Let’s take this opportunity together and make the most of it.
THERE'S POWER IN NUMBERS

Nurture would like to thank our many partners for their continued dedication to promoting healthy environments. A special thanks to design collaboratives such as the Center for Healthcare Design and Planetree, technology partners like Cerner and patient-centered design firms across the nation. These are the strong connections that continue to change healthcare for good.