

# Designing Public Reception Areas in Children's Hospitals

Keywords: Children's Hospital, healing environment, interior design, interior architecture, design for children, co-design, and co-creation

## Background and Context

This research focuses on four main topics: **Children's Cognitive Development** - especially age-appropriate interior design; **Hospital Design** especially children's hospital design, designing healing environments for children; **Public Spaces In Hospitals** - interior architecture and interior design; **Design in Context** - especially the context of Palestine.

Literature indicates that research is needed in the design of healing environments for children to create spaces that are child friendly and meet their cognitive development needs. In particular, there is little research available about the design of hospital reception areas and atriums. Also, most empirical research uses traditional social science methods to understand the requirements for healing environments for children (e.g., interviews, observations). Few studies use designerly approaches or arts-based activities. An additional factor is that most research has been conducted in the West, with little research from other countries, like Palestine, where few hospitals are devoted only to children.

## Aims and Objectives

This research aims to determine: the key design factors, functions, constraints, and programme requirements for designing the entrance areas of a children's hospitals; context-specific issues of Palestine; the most important considerations for interior design and interior architecture related to the main entrance areas; and the factors pertaining to 'healing environments', all of which can inform the design of the main entrance areas.

## Research Question

From a critical analysis of the literature, specific research questions and the development of a primary research plan were realised. The main research question is: **For a new children's hospital in Palestine how should the public reception areas be designed so that they are suitable for all age ranges?**

## Methodology

This study uses an *exploratory, qualitative participatory design methodology*. Data were collected using *co-design and co-creation workshops* that included arts-based activities and semi-structured recorded interviews. Nine workshops were conducted in Palestine. Participants included children from 3-18 years, parents, doctors, nurses, employees of the reception and admission desk, and four groups of designers. All the participants, excluding designers, participated in drawing and modeling activities. This practical design methods including tools and workshops allowed children and adults to express themselves more creatively and that the workshops, as a design tool, should be used in future research.

## Expected outcomes

Initial results indicated that 50% of school children, 100% of parents and 88% of hospital staff believe there should *not be completely separation* of genders in hospital public spaces for cultural or religious reasons.



Doctors, nurses, admissions, employees of reception



Parents



Children 15-18



Interior architecture



Graphic Designers

Designers



Children 12-14



Fine Art & Ceramic



Interior Designers



Children 7-12



Children, 3-6

However, all parents believe there should be *complete separation* regarding prayer areas and other spaces (e.g., breastfeeding areas; diaper-changing areas). Furthermore, all children between 3-11 years of age prefer art with a *nature theme* whereas all female children between 12-14 years of age prefer *abstract art*. Currently, these results are being compared with the other, unanalysed workshops and the literature to draw final conclusions.

