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Walls that comfort kids

A CHILD'S HOSPITAL STAY WILL NEVER BE 'A DAY AT THE BEACH.'
BUT IT CAN LOOK LIKE ONE

A HOSPITAL IS A POTENTIALLY FRIGHTENING place, especially for children, and fear can have a negative effect on sick kids and their parents. But The Children's Hospital at Monmouth Medical Center has acted to replace fear with cheer.

"I truly believe that how you feel about where you are can influence your ability to recover from serious illnesses," says Meg Fisher, M.D., The Children's

Hospital's medical director.

It's more than a hunch. The National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions reviewed 223 studies to produce a 2008 report called *Evidence for Innovation*. "A growing body of research shows that the physical design of health care settings unintentionally contributes to nega-



tive outcomes,” it declared. “On the other hand, thoughtful, evidence-based facility design can help bring the patient, staff and families into the center of the health care experience, increase patient safety and enhance the overall quality of care provided.”

Putting this insight to work, The Children’s Hospital has recently given its pediatric inpatient unit a major cosmetic facelift. The goal, says Dr. Fisher, was to create a more soothing, child-friendly environment for ailing youngsters and their families.

Before the renovation, which was completed last October, the unit “looked like the typical hospital ward,” she says. Now it resembles a beach. The designers brought touches of the Jersey Shore to the patient rooms, the waiting area, the teen room and the playroom. These spaces are painted in bright primary colors, with murals



Meg Fisher, M.D.

“Every day I see people smiling. The new design makes it easier to fulfill our mission.”

depicting sandy scenes and people surfing and swimming. The examination table in the treatment room is covered with a raft and the floor looks like water. The hardwood floors are reminiscent of a ship’s deck. Even the privacy curtains have beach-themed decorations, like flip-flops.

“The whole idea is to feel as if you are at the Shore,” says Dr. Fisher.

Each of the patient rooms also received a new flat-screen television and a recliner chair for parents to sleep on if they stay overnight. And the recreation rooms were completely renovated too. One, for younger children, has a full supply of toys along with many arts-and-crafts materials. “Children get a lot by painting with fingers or brushes,” says Dr. Fisher. “Art gives them an outlet to express their frustration and pain.” A room for teenagers has been designed more in the style of a family rec room, with TVs, computers, a small basketball net and other age-appropriate diversions.

However, the renovation was not just cosmetic. “We completely redesigned the nursing station to make it more functional,” says Dr. Fisher. “The nurses had a lot of input into where we put their computers, printers and monitors. We have to fit a lot of stuff in a small area. Now their workflow is more efficient.”

Everyone loves the end result. “Every day when I walk into the ward I see people smiling,” she says. “That has to help the families. In fact, our scores on patient-satisfaction surveys have gone way up since we opened the new unit. It proves you can still comply with safety regulations, but look very different and make people feel less threatened. The new design makes it easier to fulfill our mission, which is to provide quality care in a family-friendly way.”ⁿ



Walls painted with beachy scenes evoking the Jersey Shore cheer children and their families in the redesigned pediatric unit at Monmouth Medical Center.

To find out more about The Children’s Hospital at Monmouth Medical Center or for a referral to a pediatrician or pediatric subspecialist, please call 1-888-724-7123.