THE DARE

Increasing patient volumes had strained the ability of the chemo-infusion suite at Johns Hopkins Hospital’s Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center to provide a comfortable and private healing environment for patients and staff. The hospital’s goal was to increase capacity while improving comfort and privacy for each patient, all within the existing footprint.

We determined that the underlying theme for the entire project was control. The design team identified and charted key areas—such as Setting, Position, Activity, Care, Information, and Self—in which patients and nurses could control their environments. We then planned ways in which the architecture could support this goal.
THE PROCESS
In order to achieve this transformation, MCA stepped back and considered not what chemo-infusion suites are, but what they can be. Rather than looking at the space as architects, we studied it from the users’ perspective and even put a former patient from that unit on the design team, to serve as a patient advocate. We collected staff and patient input, took complaints and concerns seriously. Starting by visualizing the treatment of one patient in one chair with one nurse, we built a space that transforms typical chemotherapy.
THE CURE

The result is the end of cookie-cutter chemo. Rather than being passive recipients, lined up in a row to receive chemo and other infusions, patients will gain choices that help them to shape the way they go through treatment. Because they reflect the way cancer patients continue to manage their lives throughout treatment, these spaces were dubbed LIVING rooms.

Within each LIVING room, a variety of seating/lying options allows patients to take charge of how they receive treatment at every visit. The design includes window seats, stretchers, recliners, and comfortable lounge chairs for patients and their companions, and each room is divided into zones that offer different levels of solitude and interaction. Help Yourself stations allow patients who feel well to independently get their own blankets, pillows and snacks, while staff can continue to help sicker patients.

The final design uses the space much more efficiently, increasing patient capacity at Johns Hopkins from 50 to 67 patients at any one time. In addition to re-capturing wasted square footage, MCA’s design increases patient privacy, comfort and safety as well as nurse workspace and productivity.

The prototypical LIVING room design has been successfully replicated at two additional hospitals, Peninsula Regional Medical Center and Shore Health System, demonstrating its flexibility with a range of oncology center sizes and patient populations.

CLIENT FEEDBACK

“We had no idea we could be recreated this way.”
- The Johns Hopkins Hospital

2007 AIABALTIMORE Excellence in Design Awards
Good Design = Good Business Award for the LIVING Room Concept as Designed for The Johns Hopkins Hospital

Judges’ comment: “The challenges and needs of the client were well met by the architects, who recognized and defined the true client as the patients and staff. The innovative design in a compact spatial condition preserves the dignity and humanity of patients. The nice palate and materials are subtle. The design solution attends to efficiency as well as the comfort of patients and companions.”