Hospital Comfortability

Austin T. Miller

University of Louisville

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Dr. Paula von Loewenfeldt

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I finally arrived at my ICU room. As I walk in, I can tell it is going to be a long night. I see the small thin bed I'm supposed to sleep in, the tiny toilet that comes out of a cabinet, and only two hard chairs for my parents to sit in. I lay in the rock-hard bed and realize this might be my life for years to come. I have leukemia.

Not sure what my life holds for me with my new diagnosis I lay in thought. "Am I going to die? Will I ever be able to live my life normally again?" These were just a couple of thoughts that flooded my head in this state of uncertainty. One thing I did know for sure was that this is not comfortable. Not only is it physically uncomfortable but mentally uncomfortable.

What does it even mean to be comfortable? Merriam Webster defines it as two main ways. "Affording or enjoying physical comfort." This definition obviously describes physical comfort. The other definition is, "Free from vexation or doubt." This describing mental comfort. So how do these definitions relate to hospitals and their comfortability? Well, they don't. They don't because hospitals do not offer this kind of comfort and it is a real issue for patients and parents of patients.

I have been inpatient at three main hospitals. These being; Nortons Children Hospital, Cincinnati Childrens Hospital, and Childrens Hospital of Philidelphia. Each of these has different levels of comfortability, however none of them seem to fit the quota of comfortable. It also seems that the bigger the hospitals get the less comfortability they have. Firstly, Nortons Children Hospital. They "care for more than 118,000 children and sees approximately 60,000 emergency department visits." (Norton Healthcare, 2017). Cincinnati Children's Hospital encounters 1,652,584 patients. (Cincinnati Children's, 2023). And lastly Children's Hospital of Philidelphia sees 1,471,170 patients (about the population of Hawaii) annually. (CHOP, 2022)

So how do these numbers relate to the comfortability of the correlating hospitals you may ask. From my experience Nortons Hospital, with the lowest population, is the most comfortable. They have decent-sized rooms to stay in and a decent-sized pullout couch for a parent. Now notice although this, in my opinion, is the most comfortable hospital in my opinion, there is still only enough room for one of my parents to stay the night with me. Norton's Hospital also provides kind service when it comes to nurses and has a variety of snacks for the patients. Thus, providing a somewhat comfortable environment.

The next most comfortable hospital in my opinion is Cincinnati Childrens. Now while they seem to have the highest population, I do believe they are still more comfortable than the opposing hospital, CHOP. This could be because Cincinnati's hospital is smaller in size than Philadelphia's is. Whatever the reason, my opinion stands. At this hospital they have a much smaller pullout couch for the parents; yet again only enough room for one, and somewhat smaller rooms. Now, while they do still have a decent variety of snacks for the patients, the nurses change much more frequently, not allowing you to make a connection with them as you could at Nortons.

The last hospital I will be talking about is Children's Hospital of Philidelphia. This hospital comes in at a whopping 46,000 square feet and to me, is the most uncomfortable hospital I've stayed at. Here they only have chairs for the parents to sit in overnight. The patients get a basic hospital bed, which is about the same at every hospital. And the snacks are very limited. It consists of only two meal choices; a penut butter and jelly, and a turkey sandwich. Both of which are things that I do not necessarily enjoy.

While some of these are very good hospitals and seem to have benefits and nice amenities to each of their own, they are just not very comfortable hospitals overall. And these are

just the physical comforts. The mental comfort can be very different for different people. It could range from just being homesick to being afraid of the hospital because of a traumatic experience. The mental vexation of being in a hospital is just daunting on patients and the parents.

But why is comfortability in hospitals even important? The most important reason in my eyes is because when you are comfortable you are able to heal faster. “A negative environment delays healing.” (Clark, 2021). This article also states that when you are overly anxious and uncomfortable in your environment, “it can also overstimulate the body’s immunity and trigger autoimmune disease.” So, without comfort it can take much longer for a patient to be healed. It can also affect a person's behavior and cause them to be short or rude with nurses or others.

My experience of having leukemia and going to all these different hospitals has made me aware of a world issue of hospitals not being comfortable enough for patients to heal most effectively. Laying in small hard beds, and only being able to have one of my parents nearby shows a need for a change. The past three years hospitals have done great things for me, but they have also made me weary to go in fear of uncomfortability and mental suffering.

Picturing that ICU room where I first got diagnosed, I know there is hope for change in hospitals. With just nicer patient rooms, kind nurses, good snacks, and both of my parents being able to stay with me, hospitals could be a place that people no longer fear going to. Thus, solving a world issue that is very important to me.

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