

How Patient Care Works

Providing Nurses With the Stations They Need

For the past two years, researchers at Nurture by Steelcase have focused their efforts on understanding how patient care is delivered, and how to best accommodate the people delivering that care. The new division of the Grand Rapids, Mich.-based furniture manufacturer was launched to make the spaces and products used in healthcare environments more conducive to the healing process as well as more efficient.

“Among the critical factors in designing staff spaces in hospitals is to understand who works there, what they do and what tools they need to do their tasks effectively and efficiently,” explained Joyce Bromberg, Steelcase’s director of Workplace Futures-Explorations.

In addition to collaborating with organizations such as Planetree and The Center for Health Care Design’s Pebble Project, Bromberg said the Nurture team conducted extensive research with Kaiser Permanente, Mayo Clinic and other leading healthcare organizations to evaluate how caregivers perform their duties.

“What we observed was that most nursing stations, centralized or decentralized, don’t fit the way patient care is delivered,” Bromberg explained. “They tend to be cluttered, chaotic and not adequately lit for the types of work being performed at them. This impedes workflow and adds to what is already a stressful environment.



Nurture prototype nursing stations

Where the Work Is

The Nurture team identified three distinct types of areas needed to accommodate the types of work actually performed by nurses and other healthcare staff: curbside, step-in and immersion.

Curbside spaces accommodate impromptu meetings that don’t require a desk or a meeting room, but can be accommodated by a standing-height work surface that two or more people can gather around for a quick consultation.

Step-in areas as those used for work that requires sitting down, from writing in a patient chart to meeting

with a patient’s family. This type of area requires comfortable, flexible seating, and panels for privacy.

The third kind of space is an immersion area, where several people can meet more in-depth. Immersion spaces may need to accommodate various types of technology, and consequently require even greater privacy.

Nurture is now transforming its findings into product options for healthcare environments that “reduce chaos and help the healthcare staff focus on what’s important,” Bromberg said. “But it’s clear that no single solution fits every situation.”