

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the design of the patient unit in a hospital, when combined with a cultural intervention designed and led by an OD consultant, made a significant contribution to organizational effectiveness. Hospitals in the United States are replacing and renovating facilities at an increasing rate in a period when economic performance and patient safety are major management concerns. It is important that health facility design contribute to improved economic and clinical performance, patient safety, patient satisfaction, as well as staff satisfaction, recruitment, and retention.

The study compared two completed hospital construction projects, both involving the same architect and featuring the design of inpatient nursing units. One site was the CHRISTUS St. Michael Health Center in Texarkana, Texas, whose project was completed in 1994. The other site was Harbor Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, whose project was completed in 1996. Harbor Hospital is a member of the MedStar Health system. One site had an OD practitioner as a member of the design team, and the other did not.

The method of the study was an exploratory case study. It used organizational performance data based on the categories of economic, clinical, and satisfaction measures, opinion surveys, leadership interviews, and archival data to compare results at the two study sites. The study demonstrated that an architectural project could have a measurable positive impact on organizational performance and effectiveness. The study also demonstrated that collaboration between an experienced architect and a skilled OD practitioner could result in a successful and sustained transformational change for an organization.

Possible limitations of the study included researcher bias, alternate explanations for the results, and survey administration methodology. A significant limitation was the difficulty associated with acquisition of historical performance data from the period prior to the projects. Directions for further research included similar studies to enlarge the pool of cases examined, methodology adaptations to ensure the collection of data both before and after project completion, and expansion of the cases to include entire organizations rather than units or sub-units. The study illustrated a method for architects to do applied research related to their projects.

The study encouraged architects to learn formal organization theory in order to help clients achieve improved performance and effectiveness. It suggested OD practitioners should learn about the value of facility design as a potentially effective tool in a process of planned change. Finally, the study illustrated how evidence-based facility design and effective collaboration between experienced architects and skilled OD practitioners can make a profound contribution to an organization's performance.