The Effect of Room Environment on Patient Experience in a Prenatal Genetic Counseling Session

Elizabeth Baack, BS (Advisor: Rebecca Carter, MS, CGC)

An important facet of aesthetic design, a topic of increasing interest in healthcare, is the concept of using positive distractions to promote wellness (Ulrich, 1991). To date, this concept has largely been explored in long-term, in-patient care settings and findings suggest these positive distractions decrease patient anxiety. This study sought to understand the effects of a supportive healthcare design characterized by positive distractions on patients receiving short term, out-patient care, specifically prenatal genetic counseling. Participants were patients at a Houston high-risk pregnancy clinic randomly assigned to one of two room environments: an experimental room which incorporated positive distractions, or a control room lacking such features. Participants (n=98) completed the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) for Adults pre- and post-genetic counseling and an observational questionnaire post-counseling. There was a decrease in S-anxiety scores overall from pre- to post-counseling (p = 0.011); however, scores did not differ between patients exposed to the two room designs (p =0.530). This suggests that the room environment may not significantly impact patient anxiety levels in this setting. However, these findings highlight the benefits of genetic counseling in decreasing patient anxiety. Several themes were identified from the open-ended responses, indicating that patients do value certain aesthetic features of clinic rooms, such as comfortable furniture and having a window.

Advisory Committee:

- Rebecca Carter, MS, CGC, Chair
- Syed S. Hashmi, MD, PhD, MPH
- Andrea Harbison, MS, CGC
- Susan K. Peterson, PhD, MPH
- Barbara Rech, RN
- Claire N. Singletary, MS, CGC