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SickKids
PROCESS IMPROVEMENT
& DESIGN


SickKids 2025

148 YEARS OLD

15,800 ADMISSIONS

6.3 DAYS
LENGTH OF STAY (LOS)

AFFILIATED WITH
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

WORLDS #1
CHILDREN HOSPITAL
RANKING – 2022
(Newsweek Magazine)

300,000 OUTPATIENT VISITS
70,000 EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS

273
AVERAGE NUMBER OF
BEDS OCCUPIED DAILY

12,000 SURGERIES

~$1.2 BILLION
TOTAL BUDGET

~$198 MILLION
ANNUAL FUNDRAISING

13,500 PEOPLE

2024
Lean Summit
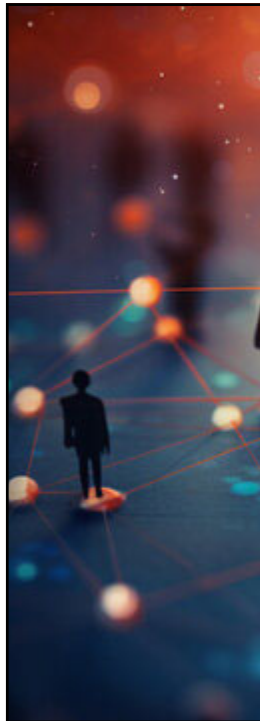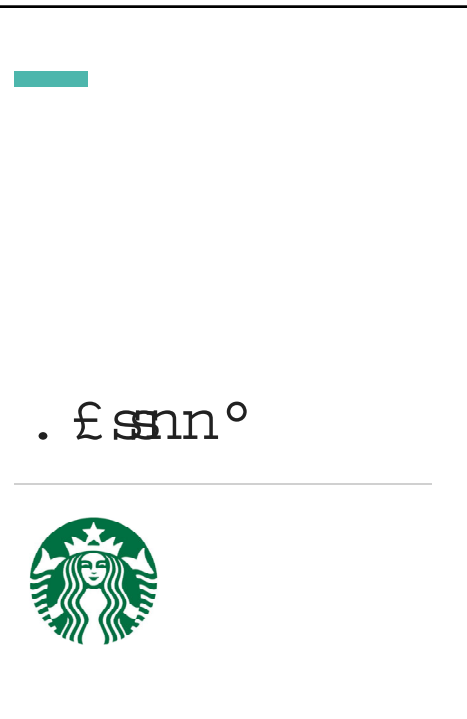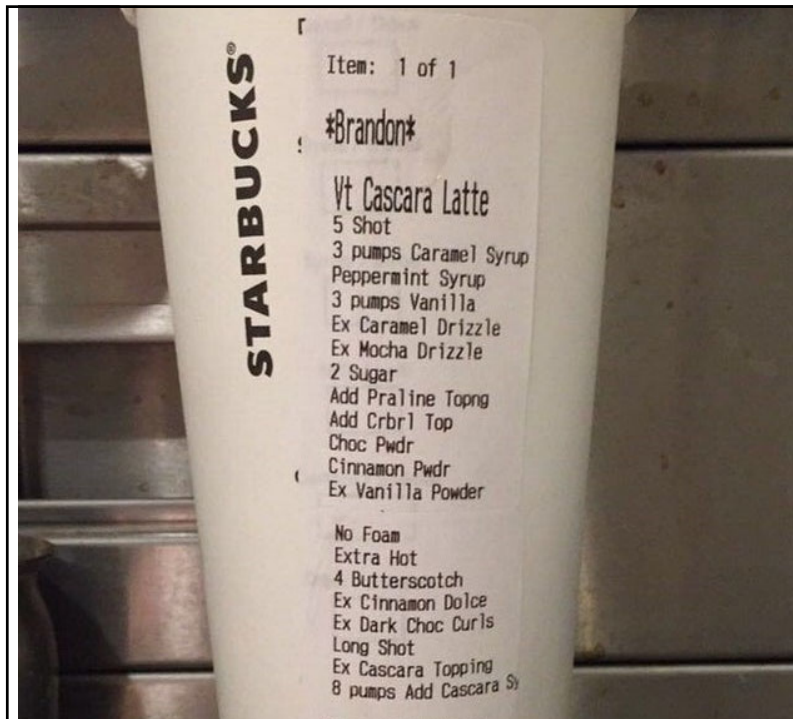
COMPLEX

Cow's milk–based baby formula

Milk allergy

Lactose intolerance

Extensively hydrolyzed baby formula

Goat's milk baby formula

Vegetarian & vegan concerns

Specialized baby formulas

Iron-fortified baby formula

got milk?

COMPLEX

$$TRAFFIC = \frac{(The\ Number\ of\ People\ Driving) \times (How\ Much\ They\ Drive)}{(How\ Few\ Routes\ Are\ Available)}$$

2024
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Passengers

Baggage

Immigration

Shopping

Entertainment

Safety

Security

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Healthcare is Complex

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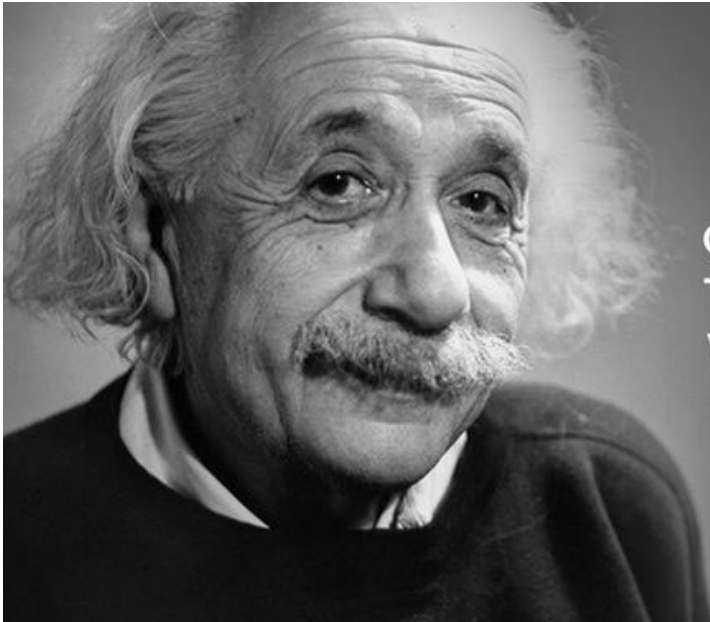
We Cannot Solve
Our Problems With
The Same Thinking
We Used When We
Created Them

-Albert Einstein

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Defining a Problem could be complex

Determine Optimal Flow Path for Patients & Staff

How might we create an experience where patients, families, and staff feel safe and welcomed when they come through our doors?

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SickKids
PROCESS IMPROVEMENT
& DESIGN

2024
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Image labels: 1. OVERTREATMENT · 2. CLINICAL ERRORS · 3. LACK OF CARE COORDINATION · 4. ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEXITY · 5. PROHIBITIVE PRICING · 6. FRAUD AND ABUSE · INSURANCE

Poor Communication	Complacency	Lack of Knowledge	Distraction	Stress	Lack of Resources
Pressure	Lack of Teamwork	Loss of Awareness	Accepting the Norms	Fatigue	Lack of Assertiveness

DEADLINE

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Selected Process Improvement Projects:

Identified the required resources needed to manage **Cardiac Critical Care** Wait List by evaluating different scenarios including number of beds, length of stay and surgical volume.
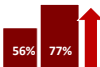
The total number of items or supplies needed to deliver care has been reduced by approximately 50% at **Dentistry**. ↓ **50%**

Reduced the time taken to finalize information for **International Patients** by 80%. ↓ **80%**

Reduced last minute parent cancellations by 28% at the **Gastrointestinal** clinic. ↓ **28%**

Increased the percentage of **O.R. surgeries** that start at 8:00 am from 56% to 77% — 56% 77%

Reduced total patient LOS at **GIFT clinic** from an average of 163 minutes to 63 minutes. ↓ **61%**

Created a model to allow **Unit Managers** to meet patient demands based on an optimal balance of fixed versus flexible staffing, with the ultimate goal of optimizing cost.

Reduced total patient wait time at the **Ocular Genetic Clinic** from an average of 69 minutes to 47 minutes. ↓ **30%**

SickKids | Process Improvement & Innovation

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Human-Centered Design Principles

Desirability
Peope (here)

Feasibility
Technology (deliver)

Viability
Business (create)

Human Center Design

Doug Dietz
Principal Designer
GE Healthcare

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A multi-faceted approach to problem solving…

Discovery	Synthesis	Resolving	Adopting
Seek to understand	*Integrate to create*	*Turning challenge to solution*	*Ignite progress*

Empathize
Measure — Define
Reframe
Analyze
Ideate
Test
Improve

Human Factors Analysis

Physical · Cognitive · Emotional · Organizational

Discovery
Seek to understand

Methods & Approach

A human-centered approach was taken to gain empathy for stakeholders involved and allow for creative solutions to emerge.

Observations
Atrium entry experience

Literature review
Access, security, & entry experience literature

Environmental Scan
UHN, BC Children's, CHEO, HHS

Co-design workshop
Staff, Family Advisors, Children's Council

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The significance of keeping the entry (and other areas) clean, clutter-free, and orderly must not be overlooked

Research describes:

"The perception of disorder within a facility can lead to unwanted visitors and escalating violence."

"broken windows type effect has downstream implications on the delivery of care."

"taking care of the little things enhances patient and staff satisfaction"

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(Churca, Ellis, & Braithwaite, 2018)

Broken Windows Theory: How a Disorderly Entry Point Perpetuates Disorderly Behaviour

Some patients, families & staff describe the entry experience as feeling overwhelming, intimidating, even frenetic. A cluttered, crowded, or disorganized entry unsettles people, and can set the tone for the rest of their journey through the hospital.

An unwelcoming and chaotic entry experience can play a significant role in escalating violence against staff in hospitals and other public institutions. This connection stems from several **psychological, environmental and situational factors** induced by chaotic access points.

The Broken Windows Theory posits that social and physical disorder, may perpetuate itself, and spread into individual behaviours. Visible disorder signals lack of respect & control, leading to violation of social norms, which perpetuate into other violations, leading to increased violence or crime. Disorder and violence negatively impact the patient experience and staff morale.

Enter carrying stress

(worry, commute, past experiences, unwell or anxious children etc)

Experience crowded, disorganized entry.

(Lack of instructions, poor signage, crowded, cluttered, there's nowhere to sit, people get lost and confused)

Frustration & anger

(feel disregarded & disrespected)

Loss of control

(chaos, disorder & feeling disregarded can evoke a sense of loss of control causing people to feel helpless)

Emotional contagion

(negative atmosphere affects everyone & spreads negative energy which can lead to hostility)

Diminished empathy

(staff can lose empathy, exacerbates tension, can lead to more hostility)

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Chaos Creates Vulnerability & Opportunity: People Slip in

A chaotic entry point can create vulnerabilities that create opportunities for people to sneak into the building unnoticed. In a crowded, chaotic situation staff can be overwhelmed or preoccupied, creating blind spots where people can enter.

People trying to gain unauthorized access can easily blend in with the crowd or pretend to be a visitor. Chaos can create confusion and distractions, diverting attention of security & staff, making it easy to sneak into the hospital unnoticed.

Enter carrying stress

(worry, commute, past experiences, unwell or anxious children etc)

Experience crowded, disorganized entry.

(Lack of instructions, poor signage, crowded, cluttered. There's nowhere to sit, people are lost and confused)

Frustration & anger

(feel disregarded & disrespected)

Loss of control

(chaos, disorder & feeling disregarded can evoke a sense of loss of control causing people to feel helpless)
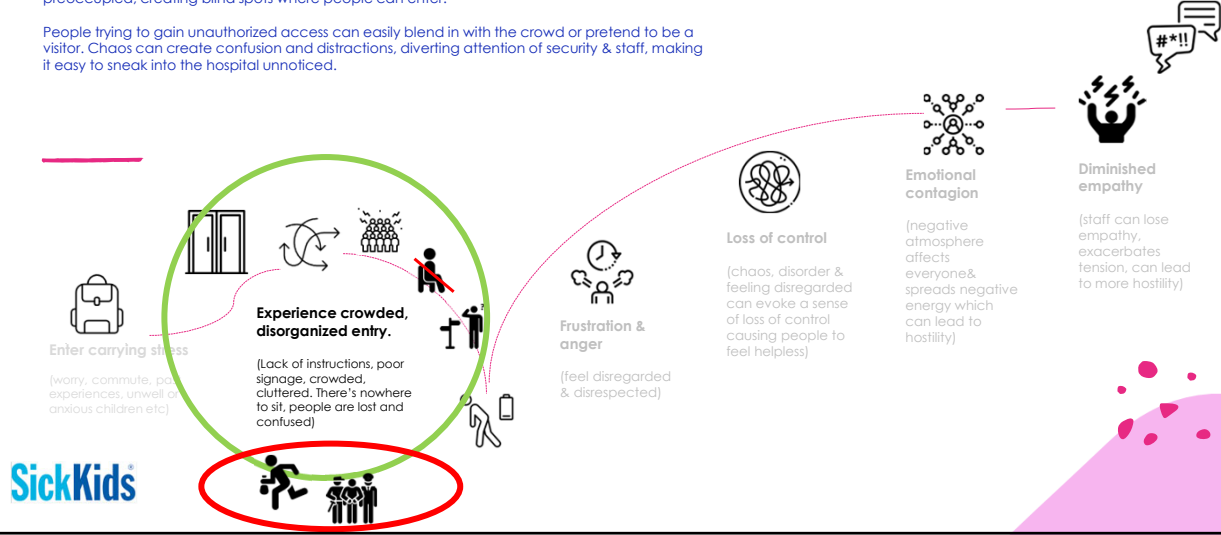
Emotional contagion

(negative atmosphere affects everyone & spreads negative energy which can lead to hostility)

Diminished empathy

(staff can lose empathy, exacerbates tension, can lead to more hostility)

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Key Themes

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Striking the right balance between security and a welcoming atmosphere is crucial to a create a positive and experience for visitors.

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Synthesis

Integrate to create

FINDINGS

Current access as experienced by the Children's Council

Imagine coming in for the very first time, or coming in if you don't speak English, or you're here to deliver supplies
Use some words to describe your experience & feelings coming through this door.

- make the help desk more obvious so people who are coming for the first time know where to go
- Tension and fear of not being allowed, especially during an emergency
- Could be confusing (from outside)
- Mildly intimidating if swarmed by greeters
- Overwhelming
- Small door, gets very crowded, going through the door and seeing lots of people can be overwhelming
- Funnel of guard rails during covid were confusing
- help desk is crowded on busy days, also is not obvious that it is a help desk
- Security presence in booth is comforting
- A little bit intimidating, not sure if you can ask them questions?
- booth is crowded
- Help desk if made obvious is great
- Security look like police? am I safe? Is this place dangerous?

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❝

- It does not feel like the entry of a huge, renowned hospital.
- I felt like I was being interrogated. That scared me.
- Inpatients find security reminds them of scary procedures, not a feeling of safety.
- Swarm of greeters is intimidating.
- Code whites are distressing.

Crowded. Overwhelming. Confusing. Intimidating

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Current access as experienced by staff and caregivers

"

- The entrance feels frenetic.
- Entering the hospital can be scary.
- The signage is inherently unfriendly.
- Seeing somebody brought in by the police in handcuffs is very scary.

Visitor touchpoints are not optimized for efficiency or customer service evoking feelings of accessibility challenges, intimidation, confusion, tension, and fear.

Visual clutter is overwhelming and presents accessibility challenges.

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Trends

Some of the emerging trends in access and security management and hospital lobby design in hospitals as reported by the literature and conversations with other paediatric centers in Canada include the movement towards a customer service approach to security, investment in designing a welcoming entry point, and focus on employee training and support. These trends are included for awareness, exploration, and future consideration.

Access Management & Security

- **Contactless access**
  Key cards, mobile credentials to reduce physical touchpoints

- **Biometric authentication**
  Fingerprint or facial recognition being explored for secure, convenient access

- **Video surveillance and analytics**
  Detect unusual behaviour, track suspicious activity, improve situational awareness

- **Remote monitoring**
  Cloud based access and security management solutions allow remote monitoring, access, security settings, and alarms

- **Personalized access profiles**
  Customized access control profiles for staff roles, patients, and visitors, ensuring they only have access to authorized areas

- **Training and awareness**
  Increased emphasis on training staff in security protocols, emergency procedures, customer service, and recognizing potential security risks

- **Enhanced emergency preparedness**
  Investments in security technologies that can quickly respond to emergencies, such as panic buttons, lockdown systems, and mass notification tools

- **Mitigating burnout**
  Overworked staff aren't fully aware due to stress and exhaustion. Burnout leads to apathy around security protocols

- **Mobile applications**
  Offering applications for wayfinding, real-time information and instructions

- **Welcome design**
  Security role in creating a welcoming environmental design that incorporates security measures

Hospital Lobby Design

- **Patient Comfort & Satisfaction**
  Designing with hospitality features in mind. Comfortable furnishings, concierge services, biophilic principles, attractive finishes creating a relaxing experience

- **Privacy**
  Creating comfort & privacy at check-in points, space between seating areas

- **Usable Spaces**
  Variety of different types of areas for patients to maximize time prior to appointments including play areas for children, working areas for laptops, garden areas for walking and relaxing. Community spaces for activities like Farmer's markets.

- **Technology**
  Offering apps to complete paperwork, surveys, access maps etc, digital signage to convey information, self-check in to speed up process.

- **Wayfinding**
  Simple, clear wayfinding solutions which may include colour-coordinating path, accent lighting, digital signage, floor paths to follow

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FINDINGS

Insights

A calm & easy welcome creates a sense of belonging

People feel a sense of calm & belonging from a clear, organized and welcoming entry experience. A warm, comfortable entry establishes a positive emotional connection with the environment and the community.

Clear wayfinding reduces stress

Clear & intuitive wayfinding significantly reduces stress for visitors. When they can easily navigate through a facility with clear signage and directions, it fosters a sense of comfort, confidence, and reduces potential anxiety associated with getting lost or feeling disoriented.

Anxiety and past experiences can manifest as people enter through the front door

People carry in their fears, worries, stress & past experiences reflecting the importance of creating a calming and empathetic entry experience to help alleviate such feelings.

Entering the hospital can be a stressful experience, and individuals require space and the freedom to make choices based on their unique needs.

Recognizing that everyone's needs differ is essential to providing a more personalized and supportive environment for visitors.

Understanding how people wish to be greeted is important. People want to be acknowledged, but not questioned. They want to know help is there, but not have it imposed on them

"Staff know where they are going; they enter the hospital with different energy" – Family Advisor

"There is a difference between feeling ignored and wanting to left alone" – Family Advisor

"Feeling like you are being 'questioned' or 'interrogated' makes people feel unwelcomed" – Family Advisor

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FINDINGS

Insights

[illegible]

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Resolving

Turning challenge to solution

Expected Outcome

Designing a safe and welcoming entry point is essential to provide a positive experience for patients, visitors, and staff. Achieving security and a welcome feeling is a multi-faceted strategy. Key steps include:

1. **People will see a welcoming help desk as they enter**
   Friendly, knowledgeable staff will be available to greet visitors, offer assistance, and provide directions or information. Nobody will feel lost or intimidated.

2. **People will know where to go**
   When people walk in the building, they will see clear signs that tell them what to do and where to go. Nobody will be confused. Clear signage & playful wayfinding will guide them.

3. **People will feel completely safe**
   People will know there is a security presence but won't feel intimidated by security personnel. They will feel comfortable about approaching security trained in customer service approach.

4. **Families will have a place to sit and gather themselves before they proceed**
   A warm & comfortable seating area will be accessible to feed children, take a breath, gather their thoughts and take a moment to recharge after a busy commute, and before carrying on with the demands of their appointment.

5. **People will be delighted by elements of whimsy!**
   They will interact with whimsical displays, interactive walls, uplifting message boards, cheerful artwork, or captivated by moving trains or swimming fish or paper birds...all things that alleviate stress and create a positive environment.

6. **Patients and families will have easy access to mobility aids including wheelchairs, strollers, luggage carts**
   Families can access mobility aids hassle free. The process for doing so is clear and simple, they can help themselves or can be helped if they prefer.

7. **Nobody will feel overwhelmed or interrogated**
   People will have the comfort of choosing whether they want someone to help them, or whether they want to proceed on their own. They will have the option of talking to people at the entry or proceeding directly where they need to go. Maps & directories will be available. Staff, regular visitors, & emergency patients will be able to move expediently through the entry point.

8. **Every person will have a comforting feeling being at SickKids**
   The right balance of support and independence is achieved, and the choice is made available to people. Walking in the door elicits feelings of comfort, safety, and open welcome. Arriving at SickKids is easy & pleasant and is even filled with wonder.

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Design Principles of a Safe & Welcoming Access Experience

Informed by data-driven insights, these principles should guide change to achieve a positive visitor experience

CUSTOMER SERVICE EVERYWHERE

Apply a customer service approach to all visitor touchpoints

- Friendly service
- Good wayfinding
- Helpful staff
- Optimize efficiency
- Avoid clutter & congestion
- Ensure adequate lighting
- Take care to create a welcoming environment
- Personalized service

HOLISTIC ACCESSIBILITY

Consider accessibility holistically, going beyond physical accessibility will ensure all visitors find their way & feel welcome.

- Access to mobility aids
- Eliminate language barriers
- Consider neurodiversity
- Consider low or no vision
- Design for the people who use the space
- Anticipate needs prior to arrival
- Have assistance available
- Proactive management of people flow

INSFUSE JOY

Joy and whimsy is not only expected in a children's hospital, but it also lifts spirits, aids in healing, and creates a positive work environment.

- Small elements of joy go a long way
- Starting your visit with a spark of joy will carry through
- Engage with human curiosity and wonder
- People find joy in bright, organized, and simple spaces
- People find joy in communicating

DISCREET SECURITY

Safety & security should be felt more so than seen. Offer subtle, yet robust security cues.

- Security embodies public relations
- Security principles are incorporated into design
- Security involved in creating a welcoming environment
- Trust is established through concierge model

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Adopting
Ignite progress

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Establish clear, intuitive wayfinding (with an element of whimsy)

Combining clear and intuitive wayfinding with elements of whimsy can create a nurturing and comforting space that promotes well-being, reduces stress, and improves the overall experience for patients, families, and staff. Clear and playful wayfinding elements can make navigation easier and less intimidating, can provide positive distraction and entertainment for children, create a user-friendly environment, increase cooperation, offer moments of joy, improve staff interactions, and create a unique and memorable identity for the hospital.
These benefits help visitors feel more comfortable and creates a more pleasant visit.

Opportunities

- Colour wayfinding
- Wayfinding app
- Place signs at eye level (can't see the ones up high)
- Feet path to follow (e.g., follow bear footprints to x-ray or follow blue feet to eye clinic..)
- Big map or directory (like at the mall)
- Better signs (use of symbols for people who don't read English)

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Offer more personalized entry experiences for patients and visitors to support diverse needs

Personalized entry experiences cater to individual preferences and comfort levels. Different patients and visitors have unique accessibility requirements. Personalized entry can accommodate these needs, such as mobility aid accessibility, language support, or sensory considerations. Offering personalized entry experiences demonstrates a commitment to patient well-being, inclusivity, and quality care. By tailoring the entry process to diverse needs, hospitals can create a more supportive and compassionate environment that positively impacts the overall experience of patients, families, and visitors. A supportive, personalized entry experiences gives visitors more control over their visit, fostering a sense of autonomy and choice. Tailoring communication and information sharing to what is relevant ensures people receive necessary guidance and support.

Opportunities

- Pre-visit communication (reach out through online forms, emails, or calls to gather information about preferences, concerns, questions)
- Express check-on for regular visitors (streamlined check-in processes for frequent visitors)
- Virtual tours and orientation – offered before visit to familiarize with layout, facilities, and expectations
- Greeter there, but allow space (available if we need them)
- Access to mobility aids
- Visual aids and maps
- Sensory considerations (quiet, calming spaces, calming colours, minimize loud noises)
- Child-friendly distractions (activities for children, interactive displays)
- Family-centric entry (seating, carts to aid with carrying items, porters, navigators, concierge etc.)
- Personal welcome messages (digital displays, posters, text messages, greeters)
- Language support – multilingual signage, interpreters, or language translation services to assist
- Separate path for Emergency Department patients, Autistic patients, or other considerations
- Option to seek help on own if desired – intuitive directory / map
- Clearly communicated instructions regarding what to do and where to go

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Provide clear and simple instructions for visitors so they know what to expect and what to do upon entry

Clear and simple instructions help create a more seamless and positive experience. Simple instructions alleviate the stress and anxiety of not knowing what to do or what to expect, saves time, improves compliance, improves communication between staff and visitors, and enhances safety. Simple instructions can be provided by way of signage, maps, digital displays, staff assistance, and online resources.

Opportunities

- Move the information desk to the entrance, ensure it is welcoming and clearly identified as a source of help
- Reduce and refresh current signage
- Clear & friendly signage that can be understood regardless of language
- Ensure signage is placed where people can see it, but ensure it is not overbearing
- Design an intuitive entry process
- Provide entry instructions prior to arrival for those who access information in advance of their visit
- Digital signage (instructions, welcome, know where you are in the process)
- Augmented reality

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Adopt a customer service approach to security presence

Adopting a customer service approach to security creates a more welcoming and caring environment, directly contributing to the well-being and positive experiences of patients, families, and staff. When security personnel prioritize customer service, it helps build a sense of safety and trust. Knowing that security is approachable and focused on their well-being reassures people and creates a supportive environment. Customer-service trained security are more adept at conflict resolution, this can prevent misunderstandings and de-escalate potential conflicts effectively. Interactions with customer-service trained security are more empathetic and accommodating, fostering a more positive experience for patients and their families during stressful times.

Opportunities

- Security officers dressed in "concierge" type blazers (not police attire)
- Security offering service as a source of information and public relations for the hospital
- Security involved in creating a welcoming environment (role in lobby re-design, creating welcoming environment deliver presentations to inform patients of security's role/attend patient parties)
- Security department has seat at the table with architects, designers, clinical staff to ensure security measures as designed into future spaces
- Engage with local community to build positive relationships and foster a sense of inclusivity and belonging for visitors

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RECOMMENDATION 5

Embed elements of joy and whimsy

Creating spaces and incorporating elements of joy and whimsy in an environment that can be challenging or difficult to be in can have a transformative impact. Adding whimsy, especially at the entry point, sets the tone for the entire visit and immediately uplifts visitor's spirits. That sense of joy permeates throughout their experience, making the place feel more inviting and comfortable and help cope with apprehension or stress. This fosters a positive and inclusive atmosphere for everyone. Peak moments (whether high or low) are the ones people remember. Offering more high peaks than low ones will help ensure patients form more positive memories of their visits to SickKids which reduces anxiety about subsequent visits. Consider how we might create a positive experience at the beginning, middle, and at the end of the visit. A high peak at the end is very memorable, yet often overlooked.

Opportunities

- Display a welcome banner
- Music playing quietly (affects mood)
- Brighten it up (colours are drab)
- Hide security
- Green space (plants)
- Make footprint pathways to follow to clinics
- Motivational wall / interactive mural
- Message wall (let patients write on it, send messages to other patients so they know they are not alone)
- Happy fish aquarium
- Farmer's market
- Bring back the train and something like the flying pig
- Scavenger hunts
- Gamification
- Places & spaces to experience wonder and delight

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A multi-faceted approach to problem solving…

Discovery
Seek to understand

Empathize
Measure — Define

Synthesis
Integrate to create

Reframe
Analyze

Resolving
Turning challenge to solution

Ideate
Test

Adopting
Ignite progress

Improve

Human Factors Analysis

Physical · Cognitive · Emotional · Organizational