BIRTH ENVIRONMENTS
Emerging Trends and Implications for Design

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BIRTH ENVIRONMENTS: 
EMERGING TRENDS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGN

Alice Lerman

Abstract

Problem: In the last two decades remarkable changes have taken place in the American way of birth. A desire for a more humane approach to birthing with the woman rather than the medical team in control has given rise to new design solutions for birthing environments.

Objectives: This monograph describes and critically analyzes the range of birth environments in current use and identifies innovative and successful design features of new maternal care facilities. The monograph offers architects and hospital planners a set of design guidelines for renovating or planning new birth facilities. The recommended design concepts and features are based on users’ needs and organizational goals in the birth environment context.

Methods: In addition to a literature review and analysis, on-site post-occupancy evaluations for three types of health care institutions were conducted. Using questionnaires and interviews of medical staff and facility users as well as direct facility examinations, the researcher has developed birthing environment design guidelines.

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INTERVIEWS

The following experts in many different facets of birthing have given their time for interviews and made significant contributions to this project:

Claire Schroeder, Head Nurse of Obstetrics at Rush North Shore Medical Center, Skokie, Il.; Rivka Willick, childbirth educator and birth attendant for the Bradley Method; Carol Siegal, Childbirth educator and birth attendant for the Lamaze Method; Dr. Leonard Fagan, OB/GYN; Chris Ryan, Director of Maternal Care Services at St. Margaret Hospital, Hammond, Ind.; Pam Wolfe, Director of Obstetrics at Prentice Women's Hospital, Chicago, Il.; Jean Stenske, Director of Obstetrics at Evanston Hospital, Evanston, Il.; Helen Hoffman, Head Nurse at Boulder Birth Center, Boulder, Col.; Judy Duran, Director of Obstetrics at St. Francis Hospital, Evanston, Il.; Eileen Smucker, Certified Nurse Midwife; Claudette Roberts, Director of Child and Maternal Health at Illinois Masonic Medical Center, Chicago, Il.; Cathy Kuffner, Birth Facility Planning Consultant.

THESIS COMMITTEE

The Department of Architecture of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has provided a program which offered the background knowledge and expertise essential to the development of this project.

Uriel Cohen, Gerald Weisman and Donald Moses comprised the Thesis Committee that provided the expert advice and support for the preparation and publication of Birth Environments: Emerging Trends and Implications for Design.
The following institutions and the architects who designed them permitted the use of their birth facilities as part of the case study analysis for this project:

St. Francis Hospital, Evanston, Ill., designed by Matthei and Colin Associates, Chicago, Ill.

Prentice Women's Hospital, Chicago, Ill., designed by Hansen, Lind, Meyer, Inc., Chicago, Ill.

St. Margaret Hospital, Hammond, Ind., designed by O'Donnell, Wicklund, Pigozzi and Peterson, Architects, Inc., Deerfield, Ill.

Boulder Women's Center, Boulder, Col., designed by Marasco Associates, Colorado Springs, Col.
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