

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN IN HEALTHCARE BEGINS WITH CASEWORK

MIDMARK OFFERS COST-EFFECTIVE, MODULAR SOLUTIONS

ABSTRACT

Sustainable design considers the negative effects that both construction and ongoing operations can have on the people using it. While a worthy goal for all residential and commercial buildings, sustainable design has special relevance for the healthcare industry. One of the simplest ways for healthcare facilities to increase the durability and functionality of their offices is to incorporate modular casework, an easily customizable cabinetry system, in the exam room, office and lab. Modular casework future-proofs the medical environment providing faster, more economical and less disruptive reconfiguration.

This paper will discuss the benefits of modular casework as opposed to built-in cabinetry and its effect on sustainable design. The paper will provide case studies from three medical facilities using modular casework. Those facilities are:

- Palo Alto Medical Foundation – Palo Alto, CA
- Faillace & Goodman, General Surgery – Fayetteville, NC
- Brandywine Urology Consultants – Wilmington, DE

BACKGROUND

Midmark considers the research and development of products, such as power examination tables, specifically designed to meet market needs as the heart of its business. The company is privately held and is dedicated to manufacturing the most user- and patient-friendly examination and treatment equipment for domestic and international markets. With a core philosophy of 'Because we care', the company demonstrates that it cares about its distributors and customers by providing quality, innovative products and services, while meeting or exceeding expectations.

Consistently looking for methods to improve efficiency and comfort, Midmark strives to design and build the best products. The Midmark team understands the role that high quality, well designed equipment can play in assisting providers with the optimum delivery of care to patients. The company's modular casework solutions allow healthcare facilities to reengineer for future changes and additions. Midmark's casework is designed to be appealing yet is economical, durable and flexible enough to meet the daily needs of medical professionals.

BENEFITS OF MODULAR CASEWORK

Features like functionality, flexibility and design are vital when selecting casework for a healthcare facility. Most facilities require durable, easy-to-clean casework that is adaptable to an ever-changing environment. Over many years of designing healthcare equipment, Midmark has learned that aesthetic appeal of casework can have an impact on both patients and staff in a physician's practice. Properly aligned doors that are free of nicks, scratches and dirt are a necessity in today's office.

For professionals who design and work in medical facilities, infection control is a serious issue. Seamless drawers made of durable polystyrene not only contain spills but are easy to clean, further supporting infection control. Midmark addresses this issue by designing its modular casework with non-porous steel construction that avoids the snagging, warping and rough edges associated with wood casework.

Most significantly, the use of modular casework provides a significant reduction in operating and maintenance costs. Life-cycle cost is as important as first cost in creating a sustainable design. Modular casework is designed for long-term use and high performance, resulting in practices that optimize operations and maintenance. In addition, the ability to easily coordinate colors and styles to existing exam room equipment while also having the capability to change colors as needed provides an additional cost savings.

Modular casework is depreciable as capital equipment over seven years – as compared to 39 years with custom, built-in cabinetry – providing a substantial tax advantage for those organizations that would benefit from accelerated depreciation. See Addendum 1 for more information.

DESIGN CAPABILITIES

Another key advantage of Midmark casework is customers are able to take advantage of Midmark's in-house custom design services. With this service, Midmark's design team is able to interface directly with architects on the design and placement of Midmark casework to develop the solution that works best for the customer.

Through its continued work with architects, Midmark has also developed a Midmark casework symbol library CD. This AutoCAD®-compatible CD can be used by an architect designing a facility (there is no charge for the CD) in the design process to specify Midmark casework. The insertion of the Midmark casework drawings in AutoCAD is accomplished using easy to follow drop-down menus. This easy-to-use casework library saves architects the step of converting their cabinetry drawings from generic blocks to Midmark casework blocks and also allows for coordination between Midmark, the architect, the end user, the contractor and the installer from the very beginning of the project, saving valuable time and money.

CASE STUDY 1 – PALO ALTO MEDICAL FOUNDATION

Palo Alto Medical Foundation is a multi-location, multi-specialty physician group. With five campuses, the foundation has more than 300,000 square feet of exam spaces, has more than 200 physicians and employs more than 1,000 people. When the organization was making design decisions for its many locations, Midmark modular casework was installed because of the pliability it offered.

“We considered custom cabinetry, but went with modular casework for not only flexibility, but because of the ease of cleanliness and uniform appearance. The fact that we could coordinate with our existing exam room tables and exam equipment was an added benefit,” said Palo Alto Medical Foundation Senior Director Jennifer Turnbull.

The increased flexibility of casework with switchable cabinet doors and drawers has helped slash time and costs associated with change. A recent remodeling was actually described as efficient by the staff thanks to the ability to easily add and delete modules.

Able to make most changes in-house now, the facility can also make changes faster and with far less cost, disruption and downtime than ever before, contributing to greater organizational effectiveness. Across the facilities, the organization has reconfigured the casework in dozens of locations and has removed it from several others to convert the use of a room. On occasion, they have also moved casework back and forth between various sites, as well as donated surplus used cabinetry to a non-profit medical clinic.

“We are able to quickly and effectively respond to changing functionality needs in patient care areas,” added Turnbull.

CASE STUDY 2 – FAILLACE & GOODMAN, GENERAL SURGERY

A private practice surgery facility in Fayetteville, NC, Faillace & Goodman, General Surgery is home to three surgeons and a total of eleven employees. When the group was moving to a new location in January 2001, several design considerations were made, including the option of hiring a professional cabinetmaker. In the end, they decided to install the Midmark modular casework.

“Look and function were key factors,” said Beth Thompson, clinic administrator at the facility. “We needed casework for four exam rooms, an operatory and two physician stations. The casework had to be multi-functional for use as desktops, with built-in sinks and had to fit the existing space.”

Because the Midmark modular casework was purchased as equipment versus a fixed asset of the building, it allowed Faillace & Goodman to depreciate the product more rapidly than if they had purchased built-in cabinetry.

The casework was custom designed to serve as storage and work surfaces. The ability to match the casework to existing exam room equipment was an added bonus. The facility is also able to interchange colors as the casework is moved to other locations.

“The Midmark casework was easily installed and extremely durable,” added Thompson. “I would recommend the casework to any healthcare facility that is using leased space or has any need to expand services. In fact, we are adding more of the cabinets to our facility for an upcoming expansion.”

CASE STUDY 3 – BRANDYWINE UROLOGY CONSULTANTS

As the only group urology practice in the state of Delaware, Brandywine Urology Consultants employs a staff of 15 in two locations. During a recent move of one office to a new suite, the organization was looking for a more efficient way to provide storage and work spaces in an ever-expanding practice. Midmark modular casework was a logical choice because of its custom-design capabilities.

“The beauty of the casework is that we did not have to adapt to it,” said Janet Protack, practice administrator for Brandywine. “The casework was designed to adapt to us. We saw tremendous savings in both time and costs.”

Midmark’s modular casework was installed in six exam rooms, two procedure rooms and two laboratories. In these areas, Midmark was able to work with the physicians and other staff to develop a casework configuration that was customized to meet their needs. Midmark also worked within the OSHA regulations that govern facilities such as Brandywine. The result is a facility that is spacious, functional, efficient and designed specifically for the needs of the practice

Added Protack, “Midmark’s staff is knowledgeable about OSHA regulations, which is invaluable in designing a healthcare work environment. We would recommend them without reservation.”

CONCLUSION

When designing healthcare facilities, common criteria include cost, aesthetics, durability and maintenance. Midmark has designed its modular casework to meet and exceed the desired needs in each of these categories. The company uses a wealth of experience, product design knowledge and physician research to develop the most efficient, modern primary care exam rooms, procedure rooms, operatories and sterile centers. The company’s modular casework is intended to be fluid to meet the continually changing needs of physicians. For more information on the Midmark family of products, please visit the company’s Web site at www.midmark.com.