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A Focus on People + Experiences:  
Using Equipment + Room Design to  
Prepare the Point of Care for the Future





In today's value-based care environment, equipment and exam room layouts in ambulatory care have evolved into strategic components of the point of care ecosystem. Both are dependent upon on each other to collectively enhance the overall quality of care provided and outcomes realized. For that reason, equipment, technology and layout should factor into any facility or exam room design discussions.

This white paper can help healthcare organizations and their design partners ensure that equipment and layout are an integral part of planning discussions when reconfiguring a space, expanding an existing facility or building a new one. The right design approach, one where people and experiences are top-of-mind, can create an ambulatory care environment conducive to achieving better outcomes through enhanced patient/caregiver experience and interaction at the point of care.

# The Future of Healthcare

At this point, anyone working within or providing services and products to the healthcare market understands the industry is evolving. The pace of change has accelerated to the point that today's industry is significantly different than that of even five years ago. One simply can point to the emerging value-based payment models and the shrinking number of physician-owned practices as evidence.

As the industry evolves, a number of trends are converging at the point of care to put greater importance on patient/caregiver interactions and experiences. As a result, increased focus is being given to the type of equipment being used in the space and how the exam room itself is configured and designed.

A few of the most prominent trends include:

- **Value-based care** is placing **more emphasis on outcomes and patient/caregiver experiences**. Since the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in 2010, value-based payment models have gained traction as consumer, healthcare and government groups work together to identify and track metrics that will improve the quality of care. One such model is the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) that is a part of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA). MIPS adjusts provider payment based on a final score calculated using quality metrics in four weighted categories, one being the quality of care provided.
- **Increased connectivity** at the point of care is making it easier to create seamless experiences. A **fully connected point of care ecosystem** in ambulatory environments helps eliminate barriers by integrating processes, equipment and healthcare providers to enhance patient and caregiver experiences and improve the quality of care. The patient-centered approach fostered by a connected ecosystem provides a platform for leveraging new technologies, incorporating best practices and employing greater standardization.
- **Shifting patient/caregiver demographics** are changing how exam rooms and equipment are experienced. A majority of the **patient population is getting older and heavier**, which is causing mobility issues. For many of these people, their **frequent visits to outpatient facilities** can be stressful and receiving adequate care can be challenging because of accessibility issues. By some estimates, **women comprise 80 percent of healthcare workers**. Even so, the built environment and medical equipment for many healthcare facilities has been designed for the average-size man. Having the right equipment and configuration in exam rooms helps ensure that caregivers and patients of varying size, height and age can adequately provide or receive quality care without encountering safety or ergonomic issues.
- **Growing standardization** within healthcare organizations is helping allow good experiences and outcomes to be duplicated. The continuing consolidation of medical practices is compelling many organizations to establish network-wide operational and clinical standards. This is making it possible for these organizations to develop clinical protocols that create efficiencies and cost savings, as well as drive better outcomes. If something is proven to work, it can be easily replicated throughout the network.





# A Modern Approach for Healthcare Design + Equipment

As these forces continue to reshape healthcare and impact the exam room, it is even more challenging (and vital) to ensure an effective, patient-centered clinical environment that is conducive to the delivery of high quality care.

Based on the process Midmark employs internally as we develop and design equipment and technology for use in the point of care ecosystem, the five-step approach below will help keep patient/caregiver experiences and interactions top-of-mind during equipment and layout design decisions. It also will help ensure a patient-centered focus is integrated into healthcare facility designs as opportunities for growth and expansion are considered and implemented.

## **1. Conduct observational research.**

What a healthcare organization wants for its ambulatory care facility may not actually meet its needs. Decisions are sometimes based on preconceived assumptions or points of view. Talk with patients and caregivers about their experiences and observe them as they move through the existing space to see how actual experiences vary from perception. Real-time locating systems (RTLS) can also be used in combination with patient flow software to gain valuable insight into performance. Are processes/workflows being followed? How do caregivers interact with patients and technology? Are there accessibility issues with the equipment, rooms or facility?

## 2. Incorporate evidence-based design.

To achieve the best possible outcome, a good first step in the process is to make a concerted effort to base any critical decisions around patient/caregiver experiences and interactions on credible research. Industry research continues to show the impact healthcare facility design, exam room configuration and clinical equipment can have on outcomes. Industry best practices in such areas as accessibility, patient comfort and caregiver ergonomics also continue to be developed.

## 3. Balance experience with functionality and efficiency.

While enhancing patient/caregiver experiences needs to be considered when undertaking any changes to the point of care ecosystem, the changes also need to provide functionality and efficiency. For instance, deciding to use a specific exam chair because it is comfortable can be a good step. However, ensuring that the function of the chair meets the needs of the space and will not negatively impact efficiency is also important.

## 4. Consider clinical needs.

While aesthetics can be important for patient comfort and an inviting atmosphere, the equipment used in the ambulatory space should also be designed specifically to meet the needs of the clinical environment. This means meeting current rigorous standards for certification and government regulations such as the ISO 13485 medical device manufacturing standard. The equipment also should be durable and flexible enough to withstand the challenges of the clinical space without negatively impacting the quality of care. For instance, examinations and proper blood pressure acquisition require clinical positioning capabilities, something that is not offered in a simple recliner or chair.

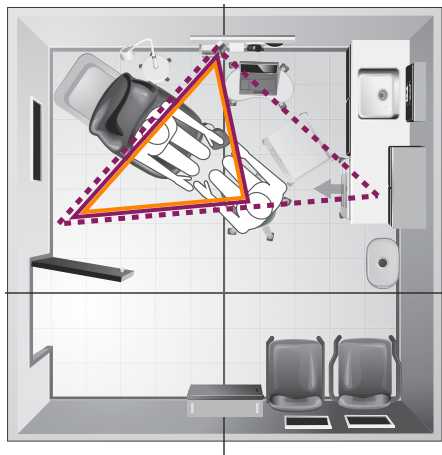
## 5. Identify the right configuration.

Making sure all the equipment adequately fits into the room can be a challenge, but on its own, that may not be enough. The layout and configuration of the room and the equipment it contains can significantly impact the effectiveness of any clinical space. When following a patient-centered approach, everything from the size of the room to the location of the exam chair can be important.

*Following this patient-centered approach when it comes to equipment and design decisions provides a reliable framework for elevating patient/caregiver experiences and interactions.*

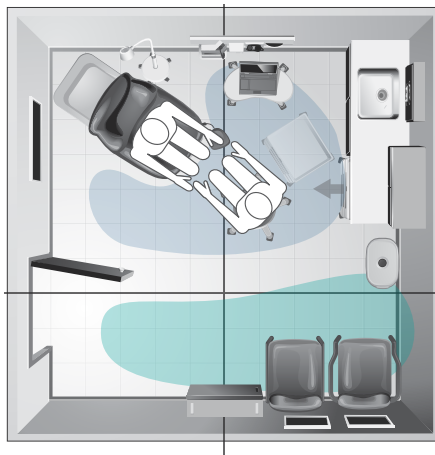
### EFFICIENT CARE ZONE

With the patient seated on the height-adjustable exam chair throughout the visit, there is no delay due to transfer or repositioning. Flexibility and proximity help increase the efficiency of the caregiver, reducing the need to move away from the patient to retrieve instruments and/or supplies.



### PUBLIC/PRIVATE ZONES

The family/visitor zone, also known as the public zone, is easily accessible from the entrance and includes seating as well as a dressing nook for the patient. It provides privacy, but does not infringe on the efficiency of the care zone, also known as the private zone.



# Is Your Point of Care Ecosystem Future-Ready?

Consider these ten important questions that can be asked about equipment and the point of care space to ensure people and experiences are top-of-mind during any new design project in ambulatory care.

1. How will the equipment and rooms be used?

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2. Are the proposed equipment and point of care space the right fit for our patient population and staff?

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3. Are the proposed equipment and workflow specifically designed for our clinical space?

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4. How will the proposed equipment and workflow impact patient/caregiver interactions, patient/staff satisfaction and clinical outcomes?

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5. How will the proposed equipment and point of care space change/enhance/co-exist with our current workflows and configurations?

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6. Can the proposed equipment and workflow be standardized across our healthcare network?

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7. Are the proposed equipment and workflow designed for and do they meet applicable government regulations and industry standards?

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8. Do the proposed equipment and workflow offer the flexibility to address our future needs or growth strategies?

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9. Do the proposed equipment and workflow allow for easy IT/technology integration?

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10. Will the equipment and technology provider be a true partner, working closely with us to identify opportunities and determine return on investment?



Changes in the healthcare industry are placing greater importance on experiences, interactions and outcomes in the ambulatory space. By asking the right questions and taking the right approach when it comes to equipment, technology and layout design decisions, healthcare organizations can help ensure each are considered equally. This will provide a solid foundation to help healthcare teams focus on the fundamentals of effective patient encounters and quality care.



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