



Colourful waiting areas

Waiting rooms no longer possess a clinical or institutional feel

BY MANU MALHOTRA

In the recent past, hospitals were only focussing on the back-end operations giving importance to volume and efficiency, but now increasingly importance is being given to the front of the house and the customer service aspect. Waiting rooms which are a part of the overall experience are now increasingly falling under greater scrutiny. Earlier, waiting rooms used to possess a clinical or institutional feel with drab and stale environments in which the users passed what seemed like excruciatingly long hours. But now, they are turning into spaces that are comfortable, appreciated and valued.

This shift is driving changes in design approach from the sizing of the spaces to aesthetic, furnishing and technologies. It is no longer suggested that one design large waiting rooms with row after row of stark and often uncomfortable waiting chairs with an institutional look and static look/feel. Our waiting spaces now have the required infrastructure and flexibility that allow the hospital to adapt to a new look with ease. The administration is able to achieve a new look almost overnight, with a change in the season. The public areas have 'exhibit section', where local artists exhibit their creativity.

OPDs may have a range of amenities that are more in tune with present day mindsets such as charging stations, information cen-

ters which are supplementary to the main reception areas, play areas and so on. While the options of check-in kiosks and self registration have appeared, they are not being used widely. Day care departments, which generally require visitors to spend longer hours, are being clubbed with dining spaces and garden spaces in order to make waiting time more pleasurable.

While in-patient rooms have constantly been upgraded to provide better comfort and conditions for the attendants, the same has rarely been true for visitors in the ICU and surgical departments in spite of the fact that visitors in the latter areas are in more mental stress and often end up spending longer waiting hours. In order to address these issues, the ICU waiting areas may be designed as personal spaces with sleeping areas giving extra attention to privacy. Television rooms, prayer rooms and dining spaces may be designed in adjunct to the waiting areas in these departments to help provide a better stay-in experience for the visitors. This allows visitors to use the space differently as per their personal preference. **HR**



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The waiting area at HCG, Nagpur.