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THE SMART MAGAZINE ABOUT MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY INNOVATIONS

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{Paris Healthcare Week} Virtual Skies in Hospital Rooms to Reduce Stress

Medical offices, Examination rooms



TRADESHOWS / July 6, 2016



Sky Factory exhibited at **Paris Healthcare Week** in late May. The company creates **installations of images of skies in hospital rooms to reduce the stress of patients and medical staff.**

Anyone who has ever undergone an MRI scan knows that the enclosed settings with clanging magnets can **trigger claustrophobic reactions**. Some patients may even find they are unable to complete the scan. Plus, many hospital offices are buried inside old hospital

buildings with no access to outdoor light, and such dreary settings can be **depressing for workers**. But it doesn't have to be that way.

David Navarrete, research director at Sky Factory, told MedicalExpo e-mag how his Fairfield, Iowa company creates installations of images of skies and outdoor settings to **bring an illusion of nature into dreary, sterile environments**. Sky Factory has installed virtual skies in hospital patient rooms, operating rooms, radiology suites, ERs and senior living facilities as well as spas, salons, corporate spaces, underground government facilities and stores.

An Illusion of Nature

Navarrete said expos are a powerful way to demonstrate what “an illusion of nature” feels like in an enclosed space. “A photograph of the sky or nature will elicit a **positive, psychological response**, whereas the illusion will make you feel like there's a window before you or a skylight above you,” he said.

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Navarrete said each of his company's installations is “tailored to the particular dimensions and scale of a given interior space. Unlike decorative photography, our open-sky compositions are photographed to give the **appearance of a second spatial plane beyond the interior envelope of the room**. This effect creates an illusory portal to what we call perceived open space.”

Sky Factory photographs high-altitude, low-humidity skies with a richer blue to enhance the illusion of depth, he explained. “The deeper blue also helps **trigger the non-visual biological effects of light on our circadian rhythm** that regulate cortisol and melatonin production, which in turn regulate our level of alertness during the day,” said Navarrete. “Sometimes people tell us our skies look ‘too blue’ without realizing that they are not accustomed to seeing an unpolluted, clean, crisp sky,” he added.

Health-care Installations

Navarrete listed two of Sky Factory's more dramatic health-care installations:

— **COSEM Auber**, a **multidisciplinary medical clinic in Paris**, sees over 800,000 patients a year in a high-stress, high-density environment. The clinic's main waiting room is situated deep inside the building, and like many medical facilities, the radiology oncology department is in the basement. Navarrete said Sky Factory overcame the feeling of an enclosed interior with **a series of interconnected virtual skylights** to give the architectural appearance of featuring an open sky.



— **Kingwood Medical Center** in **Houston, Texas**. Sky Factory installed a series of **four Circular Luminous SkyCeilings** in an architectural design that creates a palpable feeling of openness in

the enclosed hallways that connect eight high-risk antepartum suites, 12 spacious labor and delivery suites, and a 24-bed neonatal intensive care unit, among other specialty rooms, Navarrete said.



Positive Effect on Patients and Staff

Dr. Diana Anderson, an architect and physician who practices hospital architecture at **Stantec Architecture in New York City**, said research documents that lighting in medical settings positively affects the physical and emotional well-being of both patients and medical staff.

“Views and images, either real or virtual, should be considered just **as important for the**

clinical staff to access as they are for patients,” she said. “Some rooms will always be windowless in a design. It is inevitable. So how can we change the experience of being in one of them?”

Hospitals

Skyceilings



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Howard Wolinsky is a Chicago-based freelance journalist specializing in health-care topics.

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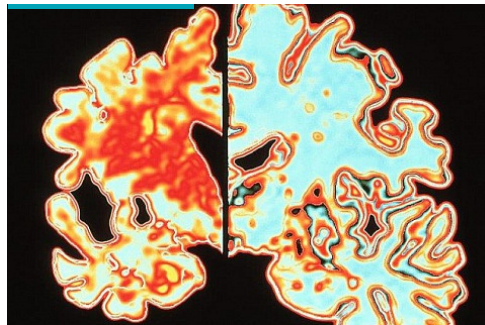
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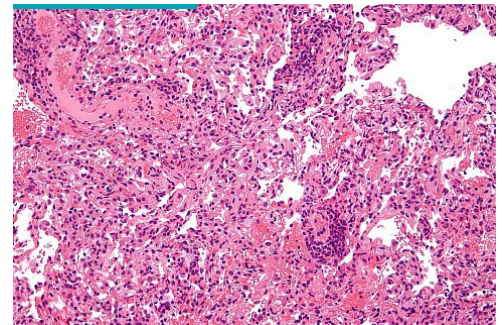
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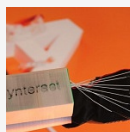
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