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re-examination

At the heart of Nurture by Steelcase is evidence-based design and a new way of thinking about healthcare furnishings

By Sofia Galadza



Why introduce another line of furnishings to the healthcare market? Michael Love, president of Nurture by Steelcase, a new company launched at NeoCon®, says there's a demand to rethink the approach to healthcare design. "A lot of people whom we talk to in healthcare say it's time to do something different, but everybody is struggling to find out what *different* is," he says. In turn, Steelcase assembled a team of researchers and sent them to leading facilities including the Mayo Clinic and Massachusetts General Hospital to find solutions. Their findings were translated into this first collection that includes Opus™, modular casegoods that will adapt as patient room needs change, and the intuitive Verge™ Stool, designed after countless observations of the way nurses use seating.

Allan Rheault, director of product development for Nurture, oversaw a team of researchers that spent several weeks at one institution. They shadowed doctors for one week, and nurses and consenting patients on other weeks. "We find it works best to do 'a day in the life' documentation," he explains. "We watch the different activities, the kind of equipment

they use, and we look for the redundancies. So then we find some insights. We'll take literally 1,000 photographs and start looking for patterns in them." For example, the team took habits they noticed from the way nurses used task chairs to develop the Verge Stool. "We found nurses rarely sat down," Rheault notes. "They never adjusted the seat or used the backrest. They approached computer terminals with hands full and used their feet to pull the chair out." Verge is intentionally backless so users can approach and leave it from any angle. Rheault adds it is robust but has a comfortable cushioning that encourages users to go back, thereby establishing good ergonomic habits.

In the patient's room, Rheault's team noticed the effort to enhance the area directly in front of the bed so that the patient can look at something pleasant rather than a wall or medical equipment. This observation informed the design of Opus, a modular system combining storage, seating, display, and a sink unit—all within a footprint measuring 20 in. Wardrobes with sliding doors do not impede the critical path at the foot of the bed and provide a



whiteboard surface for caregivers and family. “It’s a lot of little things that add up to something better,” says Love. Opus has a clean aesthetic for a broad appeal and features hints of residential styling without forsaking its clinical function. Components are available in laminate and veneer with a range of hardware options.

Nurture by Steelcase—which is supplemented by products from other Steelcase companies, including Brayton and Details!—will continue to grow. Currently, it includes the Stand Up Table, an informal spot for quick meetings that evolved from observations that sit-down meetings rarely occur; complete with a foot ring around the base to support the worker and encourage changes in posture, these tables are intended for use just off the main traffic areas. The Overbed Table, also a part of this first collection, has a divided top with additional table space that can be pulled out or hidden. Another welcome feature: a separate holder for the ubiquitous, spill-prone Styrofoam cup. If only Nurture could re-think the design of the cup. ☐

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