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# Designing Critical Care Spaces? Avoid these Traps

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Because the treatment of critical care patients is both challenging and complex, healthcare organizations must put great time and consideration into building a healing environment. In this article, we discuss common traps architects and equipment planners can fall into when designing patient care areas. The first tip goes into detail on the importance of acuity levels, and the last one discusses the small, finishing touches that can oftentimes make or break a patient's experience in the room.

## Tip #1: Not all rooms are the same

It's important to understand that not all patient rooms are the same. The template that worked for Hospital A, Room B; may not work for Hospital D, Room F. We need to be cognizant of the clinical environment, and most importantly, understand the acuity level.

For example, there are increasingly different levels of intensive care units (ICU): Surgical ICU, Trauma ICU, Coronary CU (CCU), Neuro-ICU, and more.

A Neuro-ICU will have very specific patient needs. You need ample space behind the bed for diagnosis. Some patients may have delirium, many are recovering from stroke so they have limited mobility, and some require in-room cameras to keep an eye on seizures, etc. This all needs to be factored into the design of the space.

## Tip #2: Environmental factors and the patient

A lot of money may be poured into a room design without considering the importance of environmental factors. Examples:

- **The impact of sunlight in a room** – While sunlight can be a great healing factor in a room, consider where the sun is positioned at certain times of the day. If a patient is immobile and the sun is directly in their face at 3:00 in the afternoon, they will be uncomfortable.
- **The size of doors** – Here's a great example from one of the leading NICUs in the country: the doors in the NICU are extra-wide to accommodate Labor & Delivery beds so the mom can comfortably be in the room with her baby.
- **HVAC locations** – Going back to the NICU, where a lot of money is spent on sound-masking and sound monitoring technology, if the HVAC is positioned directly over the bed, the sound technology in the room will make little difference.

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