

In 1996, a friend of mine went into the hospital for a typical procedure and died from an infection that he got while he was there. A few months later, one of my co-workers went into the hospital for a knee replacement, became ill and was placed in intensive care for five months where he almost died twice. As a result of this experience and as a healthcare designer, I began a crusade to determine how a place that most perceive as a safe environment could become so deadly. What I found was disturbing.

According to the CDC, 23% of everyone that goes to a hospital gets sick from something other than the reason that they went there in the first place. Approximately 12% of all deaths (estimated to be between 180,000 and 583,000 people per year), in a hospital are related to these nosocomial or hospital associated infections (HAI) costing the system an estimated \$60 billion annually. Hospital Associated Infections account for more deaths in the United States than any other cause, with the exception of tobacco, and virtually no one outside of the healthcare industry realizes it. You are 16 times more likely to die from a trip to the hospital than you are from being a soldier in any war in the last fifty years.

As healthcare designers, we need to understand these issues and how they are affected by the physical environment. We also need to understand why a healthcare system that spends the most money (18% of the GNP), has the best schools, the best doctors and the best facilities in the world is ranked globally in the bottom half of developed countries in overall health performance.

Patients enter the healthcare system for only two reasons: something in their body has failed or they have become ill. The quick identification and separation of these two types of admittance is the key to a successful system. The Care Kosmos that I propose is a healthcare delivery system that controls the basic cost of healthcare by delivering the required service at the least expensive level, while minimizing the spread of infection. The system is composed of procedural, facility and functional relationships that combine to separate, diagnose and treat patients at the most isolated level of exposure. It is part of the answer to the new Accountable Care Organization (ACO) mandates that the United States healthcare system is currently beginning to employ in an effort to reduce Hospital Associated Infections, control healthcare cost and produce better overall health performance.

The Care Kosmos System is currently being implemented by a 1700 physician IPA know as the Patient Physicians Cooperative.

