

Positive Distraction During the Inpatient Experience: Patients Highly Value Television



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Key Points

- Positive distraction is central to creating a better patient experience.
- HCAHPS surveys do not sufficiently reflect patient perceptions of the physical environment.
- Television is a key element that can favorably influence the inpatient room experience.
- The inpatient TV, according to peer-reviewed research, surpasses other means of positive distraction.
- To realize the full benefits of TV in the inpatient environment, options should be sophisticated enough to meet patient expectations.

The hospital room isn't immune from the forces of consumerization. Today's patient expects an inpatient experience that enhances care and even distracts from the realities of their hospital stay. While televisions are now standard in most hospital rooms, they are underutilized. Research is revealing that the TV is more important to the hospital room experience than healthcare and hospital design practices have previously acknowledged. These findings present an opportunity to leverage television for the positive distraction that patients rank so highly.

This white paper will introduce you to the forces that influence inpatient satisfaction, review the reasons why existing patient surveys fall short, and familiarize you with a peer-reviewed study that validates the role TV plays as a positive distractor and tool for valued physical environmental control, as well as important patient experience implications.

Design for Distraction.

Overlooking the television may result in a missed opportunity to create a better patient experience in the inpatient room. A look at American TV-watching habits explains why.

Nielsen reports that American adults spend an average of approximately five hours watching TV every day¹. In the hospital environment, where patients are less mobile and have more available time, television plays an even bigger role.

During their hospital stay, patients face extended amounts of downtime, noisy hallways, new emotional stressors, and often physical pain. As a result, patient room TVs log an average of 10 to 12 hours a day. While TV is important in the home, it plays an essential role in the physical environment of a patient room.

For hospital leaders and design professionals, a better understanding of this dynamic creates opportunities to rethink the hospital room physical environment and its positive distraction factors, supplement traditional patient experience surveys, and focus the inpatient experience on the television—the display screen so many Americans already turn to in their daily lives.

Patient Comments on Positive Distraction in the Hospital Setting

A qualitative study in the *Health Environments Research & Design Journal* asked patients to reflect on their feelings about the physical environment of their hospital rooms and the positive distractions they encountered. The most frequent responses categorized as positive distraction named the TV and other media such as radio, newspapers, and music, emphasizing that the presence of a TV is of great importance for patients.

The modern hospital-grade television aligns with factors in the physical environment that research has shown patients believe improve satisfaction, including:

- Positive Distraction
- Perceived Control
- Social Support

According to the Beryl Institute's exploration of the state of the human experience in healthcare organizations, providing a better patient experience continually won out as the primary reason healthcare organizations are taking action on improving the patient environment².

To properly incorporate these factors into your approach to inpatient design, it's important to understand exactly why current industry standards might not be meeting the needs of even the most well-intentioned decision-makers.

HCAHPS Is Still Limited for Physical Environment Insights.

Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey scores provide unprecedented insight into patient satisfaction and the patient experience. Still, as a tool that examines the inpatient physical environment, the survey is missing some crucial elements.

As the survey stands today, it runs long, and the questions don't delve deeply enough into the patient's perception of their room's physical environment. Questions regarding the patient room cover only quietness and cleanliness and miss the opportunity to paint a clearer picture of elements such as positive distraction that significantly impact patient satisfaction and well-being.

This could change in the future, though, since the American Hospital Association, the Federation of American Hospitals, and other major hospital groups agree that the survey needs substantial revisions³.

This Is What Actually Influences Inpatient Satisfaction.

Patients' satisfaction with their hospital stay is complex and runs much deeper than quiet hallways and clean rooms. Patients place high value on the quality of hospital rooms, and a study on patients' perspectives in the *Health Environments Research & Design (HERD) Journal* sheds much-needed light on what that quality looks like⁴.

This study of 236 orthopedic inpatients examines three features of the hospital room that influence patient levels of satisfaction.

C O N T I N U E D

1) POSITIVE DISTRACTION

Distraction diverts patient attention away from aspects of the hospital environment that are negative, stress-inducing, or painful. Hospitals can improve what patients see and hear with modern multimedia technology solutions like television that are used to deliver nature scenes and sounds, relaxing music, entertainment, and movies.

2) PERCEIVED CONTROL

The hospital environment imposes an unwelcomed loss of privacy and control for many patients and may increase negative stress levels to the point where they impact patient health and well-being. A patient's control (or lack of) over their inpatient environment can have a significant impact on the patient experience. In both single and shared rooms, environmental features such as adjustable beds and personal TVs contribute to some level of control for the patient.

3) SOCIAL SUPPORT

Patients entering a hospital will tend to lean on the support of those in their social groups. In an inpatient environment, visits and calls are key to this support. Their physical room should also foster a welcoming and supportive environment. Bedside phones, seating, and overnight accommodations encourage engagement, but the television can also contribute by giving both visitors and patients another means to connect while hospitalized.

“As expected...more than half of patients' comments referred to aspects related to positive distraction (33.2%), perceived control (22.4%), social support (6.0%), or Internet (2.7%, part of either social support or positive distraction).”
—*HERD Journal*

TV as a Key to Positive Distraction.

While the TV can play a key role in supporting all three environmental elements, it stands out most as a means for positive distraction.

The *HERD Journal* study explored eight subcategories of positive distraction:

- **TV or other media**
- **View and window**
- **Light and sun**
- **Quietness/noise**
- **Decor**
- **Pictures and paintings**
- **Plants**
- **Positive screening**

When patients in the study were asked about positive distraction, TV was mentioned more than any other factor, thereby highlighting its value and importance for patients. Any negative mentions of TV were regarding its absence, criticism of viewing position, or available stations to watch.

TV Is a Key Contributor to Inpatient Satisfaction.

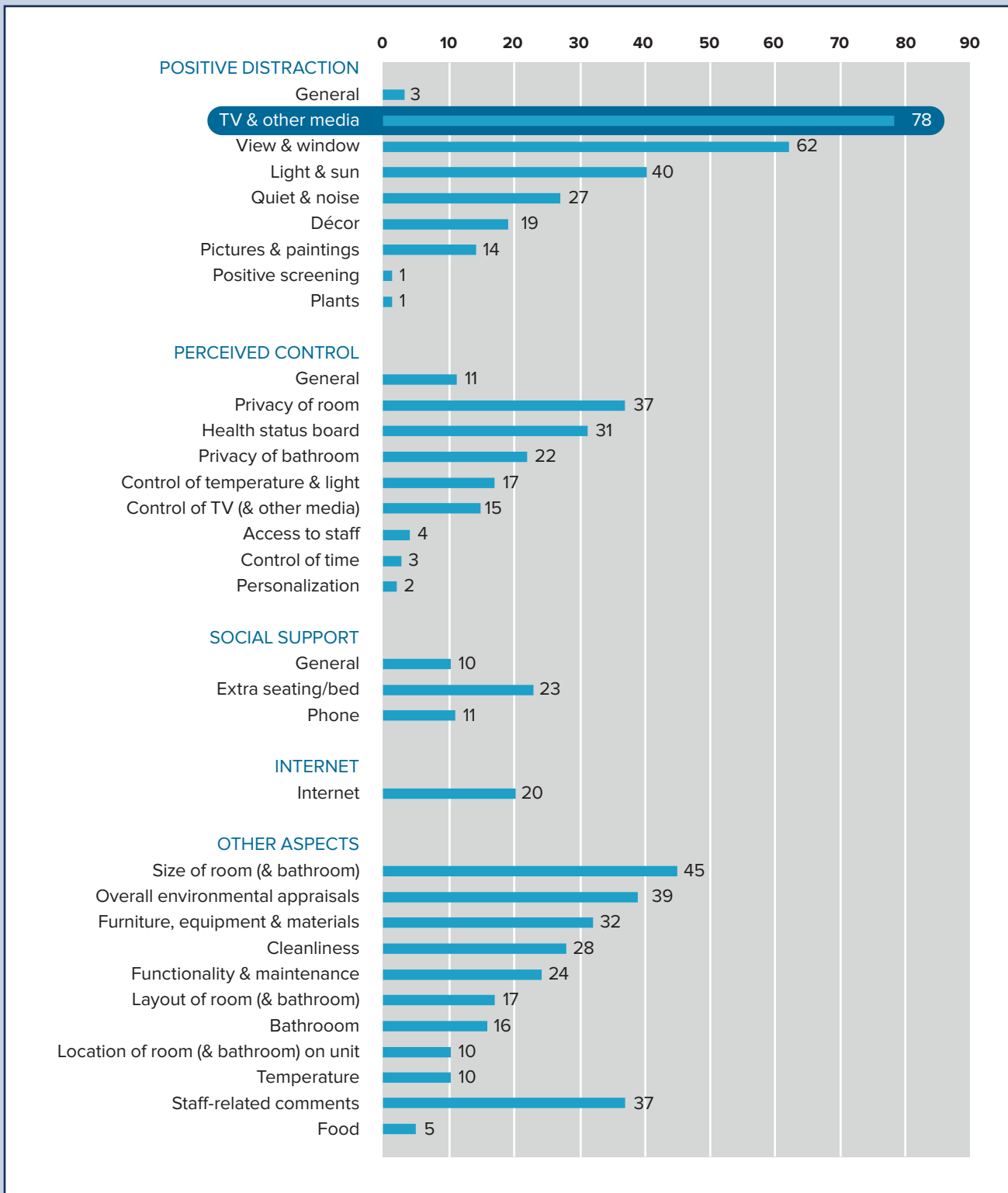
With hospital leaders facing pressures from consumer expectations demanding a more hotel-like experience, the TV can be an invaluable tool in improving and managing inpatient satisfaction. This is what the research uncovered about the TV's relationship to the inpatient experience.

- TV ranks #1 as a positive distraction for patients.
- Patients value the general presence of TV.
- Patients want to control temperature, light, and their TV as well as the bed and other furniture.
- The presence of a TV is as important as a view or window⁵.

Television should be the center of any hospital or health system's inpatient experience initiatives, both in terms of patient satisfaction and positive outcomes.

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Frequencies of Patients' Comments by Category.



HERD, 2016 Apr;9(3):190-211

TV Can Help Reduce Hospitalization-Related Stress.

With its key position as an influencer of patient satisfaction, TV can also be leveraged to address stress-related issues such as post-hospital syndrome (PHS).

PHS—a period of vulnerability after hospitalization in which patients experience elevated risk for adverse events from a range of conditions—has been identified as common in older adults. It's believed to be rooted in extended exposure to stress in the hospital environment.

Data has shown that more than one in six older adults is readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of their discharge. Death is common in that same time period, in which rates of post-discharge mortality may even exceed inpatient mortality. PHS, though, isn't limited to the elderly. Patients aged 18 to 64 have also demonstrated elevated vulnerability post-hospitalization and higher readmission risks⁶.

Additional studies suggest that mitigating PHS and accompanying risks can start with targeting the stressors that contribute to vulnerability in patients, and specifically call out minimizing pain and stress, and enhancing cognitive and physical function⁷. With recent advances in hospital-grade televisions and interactive patient education and engagement solutions, the TV can be further leveraged to help address these challenges. For example, immersive, relaxation videos offer therapeutic value for reducing stress and providing non-pharma options to manage pain.

Presence Isn't Enough.

While many hospitals have excelled at providing newer, larger-screen TVs in the patient room, simply having a television available doesn't take advantage of its full potential.

The HERD Journal study found that patients are also invested in TV attributes such as position, signal quality, and available channels—elements that align with the control and TV experience they create in their own homes. For hospital leaders, this means that the television experience will need to continually align with and exceed minimal patient levels of acceptability—expectations that continue to rise, as they are influenced by patients' TV experiences outside the hospital environment.

For example, hospital trends tend to follow hotel trends, and TV screen sizes are taking this same path. While 32" screens have been the most common, more hospitals are investing in 43", 49", and 55" hospital-grade models.

When TV Is More Than TV.

With these pressures, forward-thinking hospital leaders and design professionals should consider strategies and solutions that future-proof their inpatient TV experience.

Modern hospital-grade TVs allow inpatient room designs to incorporate TV, not only for positive distraction but also as a center of environmental control. Today's patient televisions can be used to deliver:

- **Condition-specific education integrated with and documented to the patient's EMR**
- **Patient health information and goals via a Digital White Board**
- **Automated meal ordering**
- **Patient control of room temperature, lights, window shades, etc.**
- **BYOD options such as casting from the patient's device onto the in-room TV**
- **Tele-nursing and video consults**

When evaluating and adapting your inpatient design strategy, make sure to consider solutions that not only align with today's Internet-based television standards, but also allow your hospital to easily adapt to the inevitable advancements we can expect to see in patient-facing healthcare technology.

About Avidex:

With decades of patient-centered expertise, Avidex is driven to transform the patient, guest, and staff experience using innovative patient engagement and integrated audiovisual technologies. Working together with 2,500+ healthcare organizations, the company designs and delivers turnkey solutions that increase patient satisfaction, improve quality of care, and maximize clinical and operational efficiencies for better health outcomes.

For more information contact Avidex:

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Sources:

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