

The Healing Power of Art in Hospitals

More Hospitals Use the Healing Powers of Public Art

Hospitals Are Giving Artwork a Higher Priority

Hospitals are turning to art as part of a broader push to create a healing environment as studies show that visual art can help reduce stress for patients and increase satisfaction with care. Dr. Iva Fattorini and Jennifer Finkel, who are both involved with art at the Cleveland Clinic, discuss on Lunch Break with Tanya Rivero. Photo: Cleveland Clinic.

Aug. 18, 2014 7:30 p.m. ET

Researchers are learning more about the precise ways paintings and other works of art help patients and families in the healing process. With studies showing a direct link between the content of images and the brain's reaction to pain, stress, and anxiety, hospitals are considering and choosing artworks based on the evidence and giving it a higher priority than merely decoration for sterile rooms and corridors.

"These are not just accoutrements or aesthetics anymore," says Lisa Harris, a nephrologist and chief executive of Eskenazi Health, affiliated with the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis.

With a \$1.5 million budget from donors, she says, the health system commissioned 19 artists to create original works to support "the sense of optimism, vitality and energy" for the Sidney & Lois Eskenazi Hospital, which opened last December. "This is right down the fairway of what we need to be doing to promote health," Dr. Harris says.

"Paths Crossed," by Maine artist Aaron T. Stephan, is a large, spiraling wooden sculpture composed of six intertwined ladders suspended from the ceiling in the hospital's two-story main concourse.