

live long and prosper

Evidence-based designs once again dominate entries of the annual Healthcare Environment Awards

By Stacy Straczynski

Healthcare was on the brain once again this summer at *Contract's* New York offices, as judges for the 2010 Healthcare Environment Awards (HEA) —Betsy Beaman, AIA, Stanley Beaman & Sears, Atlanta; Rosalyn Cama, FASID, Cama, Inc., New Haven, Conn.; Kate Wendt, Tsoi/Kobus & Associates, Boston; and Sharon E. Woodworth, AIA, Anshen+Allen, San Francisco—met to review and deliberate over this year's project entries. The annual competition, co-sponsored by *Contract* magazine, The Center for Health Design, HEALTHCARE DESIGN.10, and The Vendome Group, recognizes excellence in healthcare facility design in Acute, Ambulatory, Conceptual, Health and Fitness, Long-Term, and Student categories.

Overall, the 2010 entries showcased similar trends to those witnessed in previous years. Evidence-based design (EBD) models again were prevalent, staying on par with already established archetypes. The judges stress the continuing need to incorporate EBD into healthcare design and the necessity for its continued research, innovation, and growth, saying: "Designers now have a responsibility to find new ways of interpreting these concepts to provide both clients and patients with unique and functional environments."

Motifs also tended to center around familiar themes. Nature-inspired—such as inclusions of naturally occurring, sustainable, and earth-toned

elements—and hospitality-like aesthetics in the form of fun patterns and wood elements took center stage in a continuing effort to increase healing, comfort, and communication among patients and staff via welcoming environments. Surprisingly, a majority of projects took a turn toward the dark side, boasting unconventional palettes that featured deep shades of brown and mahogany, as opposed to the traditional pale tans and pastel hues that have been prominent in healthcare.

The continuing themes in healthcare design also seem to relate directly to economic conditions. "Similar to how the recession is affecting the lives of all individuals and families, healthcare organizations and institutions are learning to get by with less by reducing their operating costs and minimizing waste," says one judge. Healthcare leaders are focusing their efforts on lean processes, scrutinizing materials management and supply chain operations to reduce time and cost, as well as heavily budgeting their facility planning needs.

Bellevue Medical Center, designed by HDR Architecture (photos © 2010 Farshid Assassi)





MultiCare Medical Center Emergency Department, designed by GBJ Architecture (photos by Eckert & Eckert)



The judges predict that in the future healthcare design will continue its advancements toward flexible, universal room design for both acute and non-acute patients; Personal Protection Stations and other hygiene-focused inclusions; “pod” or neighborhood-style layouts; and increasing incorporation of technology and communication efficiency.

2010 HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT AWARDS WINNERS

ACUTE CARE FACILITIES

Winning Project: Bellevue Medical Center, Bellevue, Neb.

Designers: HDR Architecture

Summary: When thinking about the word “community,” a hospital isn’t typically your first thought (or even second). However, portraying a communal, healing environment at the new, three-story Bellevue Medical Center, located in Bellevue, Neb., was just the task at hand for HDR Architecture. Newly opened in May 2010, Bellevue is a full-service community hospital that centers its design on creating a welcoming, comfortable atmosphere of hospitality. The structure supports 100 inpatient and observation beds (and can accommodate up to 100 more when needed), diagnostic labs, testing labs, and a pharmacy service. Rectangular, linear shapes—made from natural materials such as stone, wood, metal, and glass—tie the building’s aesthetic back

into its surrounding 20-acre, wetland landscape. Inside, cool green and blue hues and warm neutral tones foster relaxation, while abstract patterns and natural textures give the hospital an overall resort feel. Additionally, the building takes on a sustainable focus, incorporating ample daylighting, low-VOC and formaldehyde-free materials, and energy- and water-efficient inclusions.

Read more on this project at www.contractdesign.com/bellevuemedical.

Honorable Mention: MultiCare Medical Center Emergency Department, Tacoma, Wash.

Designers: GBJ Architecture

Summary: Sharing is caring, or so the saying goes. But when two Tacoma, Wash.-based hospitals that shared the MultiCare Medical Center campus—Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital and Tacoma General Hospital—grew to handle nearly double their anticipated capacity, something had to change. GBJ Architecture was commissioned to design a solution for the pair of healthcare providers that would create a new, easily identifiable “front door” for the emergency complex; properly separate the children and adult sections of the hospital; and create direct connections to related hospital functions, such as imaging, surgery, and public circulation. The new Emergency and Express Care Center at the Milgard Pavilion features 77 exam and treatment rooms on two floors, with the children’s and adult wings parallel in design, separated by waiting, exam, and treatment rooms as a main circulation spine. Overall, the Center boasts a welcoming vibe with wood accents to play into the region’s own stylistic flavor. Etched-glass features and nature-inspired decals, like starfish and bubbles on the tile floors, add a sense of hominess and aim to represent Tacoma’s history. A new ecumenical chapel also was added to offer visitor and patients a spiritual connection. *Read more on this project at www.contractdesign.com/multicaremedical.*