



HOW TO DESIGN
THE PERFECT
**WAITING
ROOM**
FOR PATIENTS

A GUIDE FROM YOUR
FRIENDS AT

Rendia

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CHAPTER 1

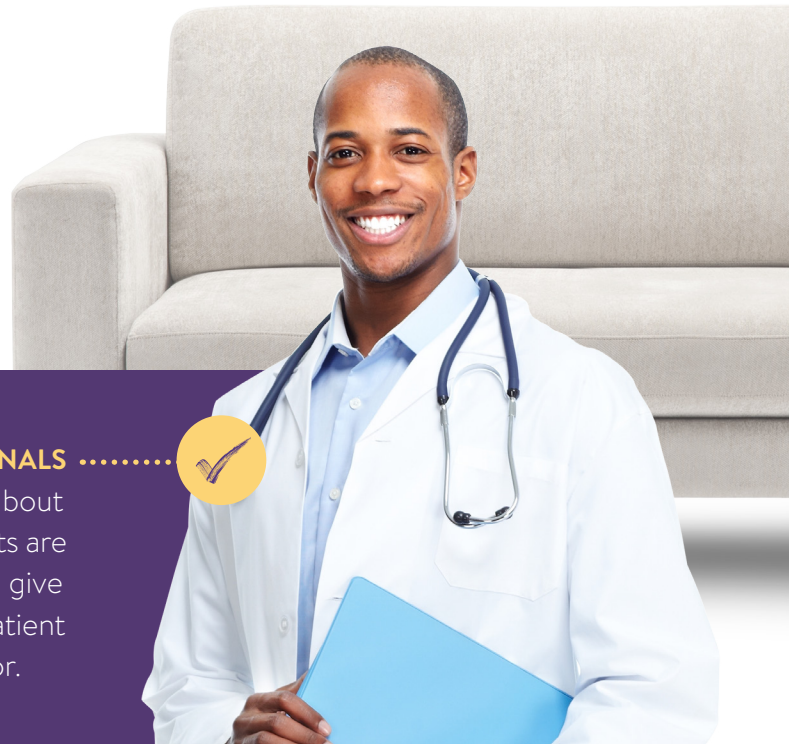
First Impressions: How Much Do They Really Matter?

What if a few changes to your practice's waiting room could positively impact your patients' perception of care, improve satisfaction scores, reduce patient anxiety, and increase referrals? Believe it or not, your waiting room may have more to do with patients' overall satisfaction than their medical care.

You may not give your waiting room much thought, but your patients certainly do. Not only that, but they're sharing their opinions with the world on social media. A quick Twitter search for "doctors waiting room" reveals people complaining about long wait times, uncomfortable surroundings, and a lack of privacy, among other things.

It's often the first impression patients get of your practice, and they may even spend more time there than in the exam room. At the end of the day, research has shown time and again that your waiting room can make the difference between anxious or relaxed patients and families.

This eBook will **HELP HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS** understand **what patients are actually thinking** about in the waiting room, give insight into what patients are looking for in their ideal waiting experience, and give medical practices the tools to transform their patient waiting area into an experience worth waiting for.



CHAPTER 2

How Do Patients Prefer to Spend Their Wait Time?



Patients spend an **average of 18 minutes** in the waiting room before their appointment.

That 18 minutes can feel like 18 hours when patients are left idle. While it would be ideal to lessen this wait time, in most cases, it's just not possible. With the rise of doctor rating sites and a more competitive health care environment, it's in your best interest to offer your patients the best experience possible the minute they walk through your door.

HELP PATIENTS BE PRODUCTIVE WHILE THEY WAIT

Studies have shown that actual wait time is not as important to people as the perception of their wait. If their time was spent doing something pleasant, patients are less likely to notice—let alone complain about—the wait.

Patients these days are more plugged in than ever. You can help those tech-savvy patients by providing free Wi-Fi and directing them towards high-quality patient education materials of your own, either on your website or social media pages, or on a TV or tablet in your waiting room. Online platforms make this possible and scalable. Patients can watch your patient education videos in the waiting room, then go home and share them with their family members on their phone or computer after the appointment.

20%

OF PATIENTS ARE PROACTIVELY SEEKING HEALTH INFORMATION in the doctor's waiting room before an appointment.

That's a **huge opportunity** for your practice to offer relevant, high-quality health information to help prepare your most engaged patients for a productive (and more efficient) appointment.



Providing purposeful, action-oriented health information during this wait time allows your patients to feel more involved in their care decisions, makes for a more efficient exam room consultation, and can even encourage patients to ask about elective treatment options they may not have considered before entering your office. Marsha Holloway, a business manager at [Scott City Eye Center](#) in Kansas (and a Rendia customer) who employs this strategy, says, “We have had patients actually choose to use a product because they saw it on the TV in our waiting area.”

CONSIDER PROVIDING UNEXPECTED AMENITIES

Health care providers can, and should, take a cue from other industries when it comes to customer service. Something as simple as brewing a cup of coffee or tea takes several minutes and can increase patients’ overall perception of value; and while we’re on the subject of refreshments, make sure fresh water is visible and easily accessible.

On Yelp, several patient reviews of medical practices note whether the waiting rooms are clean and offer Wi-Fi. And [on Instagram](#), a recent photo of a woman in a massage chair in the waiting room of her dentist’s office garnered over 1,000 likes and comments such as, “What a great thing to have in a waiting room! More businesses should have these!”; “That dentist is a genius”; “Every waiting room should have a chair like this!”

Most practices have to work within a budget, meaning massage chairs may not be the most practical investment. Alternatively, giving patients the chance to [shop while they wait](#) helps some doctors keep patients busy and boost revenue at the same time. Many optometrists are already doing this, as well as dentists, orthopedists, and dermatologists. Consider setting up a shop in a corner of your waiting room to sell something, even if it’s just books.



Quick tip

With interactive technology like Rendia, you can easily educate and engage your patients with relevant health care content while they wait for their appointment. Play informative videos about health topics, products and services you offer, motivational health tips and messages, or even fun trivia—without intrusive ads.

—KRISTEN SHaab

3 Simple Ways to Improve Patients’ Waiting Experience:

These simple “positive distractions” can have beneficial physiological effects on patients, including a [faster recovery time](#).



Make accurate, relevant health information readily available to the proactive patients who are searching while they wait with online patient education



Provide free Wi-Fi so your patients can be as productive (or unproductive) as they want while they wait



Use “positive distractions” whenever possible—brew some coffee, set up a small shop for patients to browse, or get really swanky and invest in a few massage chairs

CHAPTER 3

Secrets of a Successful Waiting Room Design



The first step to designing a patient-friendly waiting room is to ask yourself: how do you want your patients to feel upon entering your practice? How you answer this question will dictate your next steps in creating the best waiting area.

- ✓ Do you want your waiting room to be friendly and engaging? Make sure the layout provides plenty of space for patients to move around.
- ✓ Do you want your patients to feel calm and relaxed? Consider building your design around natural elements.
- ✓ Or maybe you want to create an educational atmosphere in order to make your patients feel better prepared for their appointment. If so, you might want to run a patient education platform or digital signage solution on your main screen display.

Whatever feeling you want to invoke, you can't move forward until you decide on your goal for the waiting room first.

ENSURE THERE'S A PLACE FOR EVERY PATIENT

Because patients have different needs while they wait—some may want to get work done or make a phone call in private, while parents may prefer a spot where their children can play—it's a good idea to create a variety of spaces in your waiting room.

Research on hospital design has found that **ELEMENTS SUCH AS LIGHTING AND LAYOUT** can reduce medical errors, lower stress levels among staff and patients, and **promote faster healing** with fewer infections, less pain, and reduced reliance on drugs.

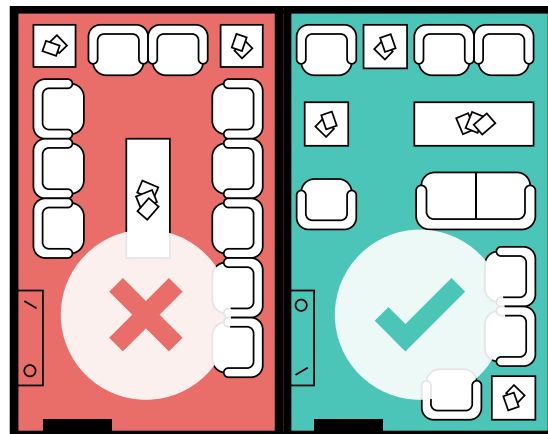
These benefits can be realized through the design of doctors' offices, too.



WHEN CONSIDERING THE LAYOUT...

Make sure it's easy to navigate strollers or wheelchairs between the furniture, recommends an article published by Array Architects, a health care architecture firm. Consider arranging furniture in "pods" so families can sit together, and have enough open space to accommodate active children.

A kid-friendly reading nook with beanbags on the floor could occupy one corner, with a work-table or countertop with outlets for those wishing to use laptops or iPads in another.



KEEP IT CLEAN

Of course, it should go without saying that all waiting rooms should be kept meticulously clean—particularly ones where small children play on the floor. Make sure to choose durable, washable materials that can hold up to frequent cleanings.

If you provide any toys in the waiting room, those too should be selected based on how easily they can be cleaned and disinfected. Stuffed animals are a no-no; dishwasher-safe plastic toys are ideal. The CDC recommends establishing policies and procedures for cleaning and disinfecting toys at regular intervals as well as whose responsibility it is to clean the toys, reports [MCN Healthcare](#). During flu season or in certain environments, it may even be a better idea to replace toys and books with videos to prevent the risk of infection.

PAY ATTENTION TO FURNITURE

When it comes to furniture, there are endless options. But [most designers](#) who work with health care clients agree that the days of waiting rooms filled with rows of generic, identical chairs are over. One progressive design company has suggested that modular seating—with movable components and cushions that can be customized to different offices or individuals—can be a simple, innovative way to [improve doctors' waiting rooms](#).

You might also consider some kind of room dividers or separate areas of your waiting room where **patients can have some privacy** to make a phone call, for example.

BEAR IN MIND THAT WHAT'S COMFORTABLE FOR SOME PATIENTS MAY NOT BE FOR OTHERS.

Older patients may have difficulty getting up off a couch, for example.

Chairs with sturdy arms and legs may provide more support, while opting for chairs with a wider seat or even benches can give patients of all shapes and sizes [room to sit more comfortably](#).



Don't forget your pediatric patients!
Child-sized furniture is a must for a **waiting room that's welcoming for all ages.**

It doesn't have to be fancy or expensive, though. IKEA sells affordable, kid-friendly tables, chairs, stools, and more.



INCORPORATE NATURAL ELEMENTS WHEREVER POSSIBLE

Research shows that incorporating nature into health care environments can promote well-being. This can include natural light, materials like wood and natural fibers, earth-toned colors, plants, and water features.

There are many ways doctors' offices can incorporate natural design elements—from using materials like wood and stone to choosing natural color palettes. Aquariums are popular with all ages, and have even been found to lower blood pressure and improve people's moods. If investing in an aquarium is outside of your practice's budget, try a virtual fish tank instead!

 **Quick tip**

For more advanced waiting room design ideas, check out custom interior design company One Interior at one-interior.com.

—SMITHA GOPAL



LOOKING FOR A MORE LOW-MAINTENANCE OPTION?

Plants can really **improve the look of your waiting room** and even improve the air quality. Aloe vera and spider plants are two options that require minimal care and don't need a lot of natural light.



ADD A SPLASH OF COLOR

Basic color psychology can have a significant impact on your patients' (and your staff's) mood. For a doctor's office, consider painting the walls a soft shade of blue or green—blue is said to relax and slow heart rate and green is said to be “the most restful color for the eye”—both have a calming effect on people when used in large open living spaces.



Quick tip

Paying attention to your waiting room's ambiance and offerings will pay off with satisfied patients and parents. For more ideas on helping your patients stay happy and healthy, subscribe to our newsletter at go.rendia.com/subscribe-today/.

—RACHEL BISHOP

Stay away from reds and oranges that evoke energy and excitement (which makes them great for gyms or exercise rooms, but not so great for waiting rooms); and stay away from yellow, which is said to induce irritability when used in large quantities. If you're in need of some inspiration, check out this online tool from Olympic that lets you upload an image of your waiting room and “try on” different shades of paint.

Décor matters, too. Waiting rooms that display artwork have been associated with improvements in patients' perceived quality of care. Don't just throw any old artwork on the walls—remember how you want your patients to feel upon entering your practice, and choose pieces that reflect that goal. Experts have recommended landscape paintings (which would match perfectly with your new plants!)

Your waiting room layout & design essentials checklist:

-  Create plenty of open space for wheelchairs and strollers to navigate easily
-  Use durable, washable materials and dishwasher safe toys to keep the area squeaky clean
-  Provide a variety of sturdy seating options for patients of all shapes and sizes
-  Incorporate low-maintenance natural design elements to improve indoor air quality
-  Paint walls a cool, calming color that's easy on the eyes to help patients relax before their appointment

CHAPTER 4

Practical Technology and Hardware Solutions



Technology is an important component of modern medical care, and you should carefully consider how best to incorporate it into your office’s design and layout.

ORGANIZE YOUR WAITING ROOM TO OPTIMIZE TECHNOLOGY

How you design your internal layout is crucial to your waiting room’s success. This means optimizing the location of your technology to achieve maximum visibility.

As we mentioned in chapter two, free Wi-Fi is mostly expected these days, especially by younger generations. “Millennials are a crucial generation of customers for any business—including health care—to consider,” writes Micah Solomon in Forbes, discussing why the Cleveland Clinic is making changes to accommodate the 80 million millennials in the U.S. As the first generation to grow up with the Internet and smartphones as part of their everyday lives, this group has very different expectations of time, convenience, and their doctors’ offerings.

Having a few outlets in the room that have different chargers available can make everyone’s life a little easier. It’s a simple offering that your patients will notice and thank you for doing, and there are inexpensive solutions to ensure no one accidentally walks away with your small investment.

MAKE SURE THAT SCREEN DISPLAYS ARE A FOCAL POINT

Screen displays can be a way to engage people of all ages and keep them both busy and calm.

But don’t simply tune the TV to a cartoon channel—or worse yet, the news—and leave it on all day. Violence in the news has been associated with elevated stress levels and physical discomfort in those watching, and can be especially detrimental for young viewers; cartoons are risky because not all kids’ shows are appropriate for children of all ages.

The ability to control the programs your patients view in the waiting area will allow you more control over their exam room experience, their patient satisfaction scores, their perceived quality of care, and, ultimately, their health outcomes.

Rendia offers a happy medium for patients of all ages with hundreds of entertaining and educational videos that can be played silently, such as our “Two Pennies” joke that’s sure to be a hit with young readers, and our “Name that Animal” quiz that challenges kids to guess the image reveal. You can both calm your older patients and empower them to manage stress by playing our “Guided Meditation” vignette.

If you have a TV or other screen display turned on, try muting it and putting on closed captions so as not to disturb patients who prefer a quiet environment.

INVEST IN THE RIGHT HARDWARE

With screens, you will inevitably need input devices. An easy-to-use input device that is becoming more and more popular is the ‘Mini-PC’. It works by simply plugging into the back of your TV or screen display. If you don’t have a setup that can feasibly support a full-sized computer being connected to your waiting room display—due to layout, size, or even just personal preference—then this is a no-brainer solution.

At the end of the day, you want a **waiting room you can be proud to show off to patients.** From updating your technology to redesigning your appearance, making changes to your waiting area can mean the difference between saying you care about your patients and showing you do.






Quick tip

Rendia comes with a TV stick that can be plugged into your waiting room television to display beautiful, high-quality patient education videos. Choose to motivate, calm, entertain, or educate patients with hundreds of video options. Find out more at go.rendia.com/waiting-room-videos/.

—KATIE MOYER

Your waiting room technology and hardware essentials:

-  Make sure outlets are visible and accessible for patients who may need to recharge their mobile devices
-  Opt for high-quality, engaging educational programs to play on your TVs instead of the news or cartoons
-  Take advantage of inexpensive, easy-to-use input devices—such as a Rendia TV stick—to display high-quality content on your central display screens

CHAPTER 5

Final Thoughts & About Rendia

With a little creativity and a small investment, you can make your waiting room a **pleasant and productive space for your patients**. When patients' first impression of your practice is a good one, they're sure to spread the word.

To learn more about how Rendia helps you connect with patients and empower them to make informed health decisions, [contact us today!](#)

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ABOUT RENDIA

Rendia is educational software that blends stunning clinical artwork with interactive technology to help medical professionals and patients understand each other better. By bridging the communication gap between doctors and patients, Rendia empowers patients to make informed health decisions and experience better outcomes.

LEARN MORE ABOUT RENDIA FOR YOUR WAITING ROOM

Set your patients up for a successful appointment with Rendia's engaging educational content at every step of their visit.

Play Rendia videos on your waiting room screens to:

- ✓ Customize your patients' experience from the moment they walk in the door
- ✓ Set the tone for every appointment with videos to educate, inform, motivate, and entertain your patients
- ✓ Easily update your waiting room playlists as needed with Rendia's online platform
- ✓ Play informative videos about health topics, products and services you offer, motivational health tips and messages, and even fun trivia. Best of all, no ads!