



## **The Employment of Natural Art as a Means for Enhancing the Patient Experience - A Process Improvement Project**

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## ABSTRACT

This article gives an account of the staff, working at a cardiac stress lab, in a process improvement initiative, employing natural art in the form of light paneling for enhancing the patient experience by decreasing the anxiety that patients experience when undergoing cardiac stress testing as well as other cardiac procedures. The article gives a brief history of the use of aesthetics in health care as well as research done to substantiate the results of aesthetics that has been employed to improve not only the patient experience, but also the health of the patient as well. The article also details the process used in choosing the right art scenes employed as well as the responses from the patients and the staff as well.

## KEYWORDS

*Cardiac, Stress, Natural, Art, Aesthetics*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since of the beginnings of health care and the performance of health care in the centralized healthcare domicile, there have been ways in which aesthetics have been employed to improve the patient experience. As of recent there have been studies undertaken to ascertain the effect of aesthetics on the patient experience. One of these studies, by Bonett in 2015, gave credence to the use of ceiling art and observing 89.8% positive reaction to the artwork during radiation therapy. Another case study by Nielson et al (2017) reported that the employment of art in the health care environment had the “potential to positively affect patients’ satisfaction with their sojourn in the hospitals” (p.12). In light of the positive effects of the utilization of art in the health care facilities, Northwestern Memorial Hospital (2018) has employed a number of approaches to not only enhance the patient experience, but also improve

patient outcomes with measures such as private rooms, navigable spaces, community spaces as well as pleasant spaces within the facility to include naturalistic visual art which they attribute to the reduction of heart rate, reduction of the pain sensation and increasing patient satisfaction.

## RESEARCH STUDY

In our outpatient cardiology department the staff performs a variety of outpatient and inpatient cardiac test procedures. These procedures are sometimes benign, but other tests can be anxiety producing, uncomfortable or both. In keeping with the goal of always trying to improve the patient experience along with being a source of comfort along with assisting to ease the patients’ anxiety before and during cardiology procedures, the nursing staff in the department sought ways to help the patients relax for their tests and procedures



while enhancing the total patient experience.

In utilizing the affirmed belief that art therapy and aesthetics have the potential to create a positive effect in the health care setting, the nursing staff in the cardiac stress lab undertook a project to enhance the patient experience by the use of nature art scenes as well as working on the effort to reduce the anxiety of the patients undergoing a stress tests and other cardiac procedures. I as the team leader with the support of my nurse manager, Amy Ostrosky who oversees the entire outpatient cardiology department at UH Portage, undertook the process improvement project to install natural scenic light tiles to replace the usual light tiles. In preparing for this project, the nursing staff started the project in December of 2017. I started by researching the nature art and received input from my colleagues Sheri Clark RN, Brenda Smith RN and Brittany Musgrave RN; all of whom are nurses at the UH Portage Cardiology Stress Lab, as to the scenes that would be most pleasing to the patients. After we agreed on which lighted tiles would be most appropriate and calming to our patients; these scenes selected by the nurses were of natural scenes such as a beach scene with a palm tree, a lush tropical waterfall, puffy white clouds in the sky, a scenic blue sky and a scene of a canopy of

tall green trees. Once the scenes were agreed upon they were purchased in December of 2017 through a site called [proceilingtiles.com](http://proceilingtiles.com). The tiles were installed in the month of January of 2018.

## OUTCOME

The responses to the staff over the scenic views have been very positive. A large portion of patients regard the nature tiles as very pleasing and peaceful. The most important comments have been “how relaxing the scenes are”. Some of the comments have been: “Smart Idea”, “Nice to look at”, “At least they give you something pretty to look at”, “Oh you have a nice picture”, “Better than looking at a blank Ceiling” and finally “Looks soothing and relaxing”. The patients themselves appear more at ease and relaxed when viewing the artwork before the stress testing begins and continue in a relaxed state during the stress testing process. As a side note, the response from the staff have been positive as well citing how beautiful and relaxing the scenes are and that they enjoy the scenery. The one exception with the staff was from the staff performing echocardiograms reporting that for patients having an echocardiogram done they can’t enjoy the scenery due to the dimmed lighting.



In the next phase of enhancing the patient experience, the staff are looking into using music therapy and aromatherapy to also reduce anxiety and promote a feeling of wellbeing in the cardiology area.



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