

## OPINION

# OPTIMAL HEALING ENVIRONMENT: A NEW MANTRA FOR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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In this post-modern era, healing practices in Health Care Institutions are gaining importance. Fostering wellness by Salutogenesis<sup>1</sup> and promoting healing by creating Optimal Healing Environment (OHE) are two major initiatives in innovative and forward-looking Healthcare Institutions<sup>2</sup>.

## Healing vs Cure

Many of us do not differentiate between cure and healing. Often, it is assumed that effecting cure will automatically lead to healing. It is not so; one can be cured but not healed. A guru once explained the difference to me, which is worth sharing with others: The guru said, *“Let us assume that when you go back home today, your apartment door is broken and some thieves have stolen all your possessions. You report it to the police; they are able to quickly catch the thieves and get back all your possessions. So, as far as the police is concerned ‘the case is closed successfully’; this is like curing an illness that you do in hospital. However, the next day, while sitting in the office, are you the same person of composure as you were before the theft? Definitely not! Your mind is still fearful of any further theft. This means that your social problem has been ‘cured’ by the Police but it has still not ‘bealed’.* Only when you return back to your original state of composure and equanimity, can you consider yourself as personally and wholly ‘cured’. I hope the difference between curing and healing is clear now”. Therefore, curing and healing are mutually complementary and both are essential.

OHE practices<sup>3</sup> promote healing in addition to curing<sup>3</sup>.

## Four Domains of Optimal Healing Environment

There are four domains described as the components of OHE.

- Internal domain
- Interpersonal domain
- Behavioural domain
- External domain

### I. Internal Domain

This domain is based on

1. Developing Healing Intention and
2. Experiencing personal wholeness

A patient must want to get well (healing intention); otherwise, all the activities undertaken by the healthcare professionals may not yield the expected result. Healing Intention can be promoted in a patient by enhancing his/her

- i) Self Belief,
- ii) Understanding,
- iii) Expectation and
- iv) Hope

Experiencing personal wholeness involves holistic development of the mind, the body, the spirit, and the energy. It often needs a multi-disciplinary approach.

### II. Interpersonal Domain

This domain involves 1) cultivating healing relationships and 2) creating a ‘healing organisation’.<sup>3</sup>

1. Healing relationship is between the patient and his/her healthcare provider. This is based on the provider showing empathy and compassion, providing social support to the patient and achieving all this through effective communication.
2. Healing organisation can be created by adopting it as a mission statement, with forward-looking

leadership, the use of technology and through effective team work. The ultimate goal of a healing organisation is to promote holistic healing.

### III. Behavioural Domain

Behavioural domain refers to the positive changes in the behaviour that promote healing. It involves:

1. Practicing Healthy lifestyle (Healthy Diet, exercise, relaxation & avoiding substance abuse)
2. Applying collaborative health care practices (Patient centred and culturally appropriate integrative practices for holistic care).

This domain applies to both the patient and the care provider in terms of making positive changes in behaviour to foster holistic healing.

### ▼ References

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3. Jonas WB, Chez RA, Smith K, Sakallaris B. Salutogenesis: The Defining Concept for a New Healthcare System. *Global Adv Health Med*. 2014;3(3):82-91. DOI:10.7453/gahmj.2014.005.
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### IV. External Domain

External domain refers to creating aesthetic buildings and interior decor that create an ambience that promote healing. This involves appropriate use of colour and light, Aroma and Art, Music and sound, Art Objects and Architecture (In fact, architectural design for Salutogenesis is active area of research right now).

External domain also involves being eco-friendly, energy efficient and to be in tune with nature in a sustainable way.

As evidence about the benefits of healing environments accumulates, forward-looking health care providers are starting to incorporate features into the hospital design that reduce stress and promote optimal healing<sup>4</sup>.