



Green Guide for Health Care Newsletter

May 2006

Greening Health Care Facilities: a CEO's Perspective

The recent CleanMed conference in Seattle, Washington, featured presentations by health care CEOs across the country. The following remarks are a summary of their collective perspective on the value of green building and operations. Presenters included Richard Beam (CEO, Providence Health and Services), James Tuschmidt (CEO, Portland VAMC), Judith Waterston (CEO, Spaulding Hospital), and James Lussier (President Emeritus & Board Member, Cascade Healthcare Community & St. Charles Medical Center).

Fundraising

The myth that building and operating a green facility is more expensive than the status quo is easily debunked if one factors the resulting operations and maintenance cost reductions into the hospital's revenue stream. Readily accessible energy and water conservation strategies can save a typical hospital between \$100,000 and \$200,000 a year in operating costs. Translated to the hospital's budget at current operational profit margins, a \$100,000 cost savings would represent the equivalent of roughly \$2.7 million in new revenue. Rather than working to generate millions of dollars in new revenue to continue updating the facility, cost savings generated by high performance strategies provide the hospital with the opportunity to reinvest in additional measures that impact the facility's bottom line and/or patient experience.

Core Values

The health care industry is increasingly recognizing the connection between its ecological footprint and its core values. Linking efforts to green a facility with the hospital's commitment to stewardship resonates with staff and executives alike. Including a commitment to human health and the environment in the organization's mission statement helps maintain a balance between environmental and financial pressures at the highest level. Providence Newberg's (Newberg, Oregon) mission statement, for example, encourages decisions that foster the triple bottom line: "We wisely care for and share human, environmental and financial resources held in trust."

Take Advantage of Community Resources

No need to re-invent the wheel! Resources are available to facilities and health systems that are interested in greening their operations, construction projects, or both. Many of these resources are free, incorporated into a governmental or utility program, or inexpensive in comparison to the economic, community, and environmental benefits they provide. A short list of resources recommended by CleanMed speakers includes: Better Bricks Integrated Design Lab (construction, www.betterbricks.com), *Green Guide for Health Care* (construction and operations, www.gghc.org), Health Care Without Harm (health care delivery and operations, www.noharm.org), Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (operations, www.h2e-online.org), and US EPA (operations, www.epa.gov).

An Integrated Process is the Key to Success

Whether a health care organization focuses on green design or green operations, developing a transparent and interdisciplinary process that fosters an atmosphere of responsibility and accountability paves the path for successful outcomes. Very early in the design process, the Providence Newberg hospital's integrated design team held a design charrette and an energy charrette, in addition to coordinating a community eco-charrette. The result was community backing for the project and a series of partnerships with regional utilities and businesses that funded an additional \$1/2 million in energy efficiency upgrades. Another example, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center in Portland, Oregon, found that a systematic approach to implementing the national "Green Environmental Management System" (GEMS) standard has both reduced operating costs and improved workplace safety and satisfaction. As is true with other programs, their success relies on approaching the program as a vehicle for continuous improvement, setting realistic annual goals, and measuring progress to establish accountability across the organization.

Green is a Springboard to Creating a Healing Environment

The US health care industry is shifting towards patient-centered care and transforming a hospital's institutional environment into a healing environment. Likewise, many health care facilities are beginning to incorporate green strategies into their way of doing business. These two movements feed off of each other in the most innovative facilities by using small, inexpensive successes (such as conducting a water audit, installing fluorescent lighting, or switching to a greener cleaning protocol) to break down barriers to more fundamental innovations, such as healthy food, room service, organic cotton sheets, vegetated roofs, circadian rhythm accommodations, and improved acoustics in inpatient suites. A process that began as a way to lower operating costs has the potential to transform the nature of the entire organization. As James Lussier put it during his talk at CleanMed, facilities that implement green design and operations begin to realize that "the building itself, how it's designed, how it's maintained, actually provides care." Ensuring that the care provided by the building reinforces, rather than hinders, the healing process is the goal and the challenge for green building practitioners.

News

1. **June 2006 Green Guide for Health Care teleconference: Circadian Rhythm.** The *Green Guide* offers teleconferences through the Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E) website every first Friday of the month. Register for this **FREE** educational opportunity at www.h2e-online.org/teleconferences/calendar.cfm
2. **CleanMed Europe 2006, is scheduled to take place in Stockholm, Sweden, May 29- 31** CleanMed is the premiere environmental conference for health care leaders and staff. Learn more at www.cleanmed.org.
3. **Green Guide featured in the national radio program "Marketplace,"** from American Public Media. Listen to the piece called "Hospitals Going Green" from the May 17, 2006, broadcast: <http://marketplace.publicradio.org/shows/2006/05/17/PM200605177.html?refid=0>.
4. **Research by a Green Guide Pilot project** published in the November 2005 issue of the *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* (<http://www.ajl.or.jp/eng/iaabe/issues.htm>). The article is entitled "Caregivers' Evaluation on Hospitalized Children's Preferences Concerning Garden and Ward."
5. **Time Magazine** article discusses **healthier hospital food.** View the article at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1194018,00.html>.
6. E-magazine *GreenBiz.com* outlines **health care's efforts to reduce its environmental footprint.** View the article at: http://www.greenbiz.com/news/revIEWS_third.cfm?NewsID=30817
7. Visit the **Supporters** section of the *Green Guide* website for **information on how to support our work.** All donations to the *Green Guide* are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.