

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to illustrate the impact of nature on patients and staff and whether nature photographs evoke associations that can invigorate the observer. This work also looked at the potential impact on a person's wellbeing and the preferences for nature motifs among patients and staff. One further aim was to study how hospital rooms are perceived by patients and staff, the significance of this, and how they can be transformed into a resource by drawing on nature for inspiration.

This study has been conducted at a women's clinic for the severely ill. The ward in question was first built in the 1970s and has not been renovated. Stress levels among staff and patients were high. Nature elements in the form of photographs were installed in patients' rooms and staff areas for one month. A questionnaire containing both open and closed questions was distributed to patients and staff. The data collected has been processed by means of a content analysis.

Nature experiences and nature photographs increased the feeling of wellbeing among respondents. The patients also reported that the experiences and images helped them to cope with symptoms and to banish upsetting thoughts. Staff preferred motifs featuring still water because of their calming influence. The patients preferred forest motifs because these felt safe and familiar. This is in line with research within this field. It was generally the case that patients and staff perceived rooms and areas as unpleasant, which had a considerable impact. There was a great discrepancy between the wishes of patients and staff and the care environment on offer. Respondents also thought that the care environment needed modernising. Nature photographs improved conditions for the provision of care by staff and supported the patient during the healing process. Simple changes are all that are needed to improve conditions within healthcare. This study will continue for two years, during which time more nature elements will be incorporated into the care environment.

Keywords: nature experience, nature photograph, nature and health, care environment, wellbeing and nature and care.