Policies and procedures

Sensory and thermal environment

This audit module is designed to be used when you want to determine how your systems, policies, procedures and processes can help optimise the sensory and thermal environment experienced by patients.

It looks at how light, noise, smells, textures and temperature influence an older patient's participation in their care.

You may use this audit module on its own or as part of an audit of other aspects of policy and procedure, or of the physical space.

This audit module contains 11 questions and will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

Some questions may not be relevant. Where this is the case, there is an option to select 'not applicable,' however please complete as many questions as possible to conduct a thorough audit.

A notes section is provided underneath each question to record any additional information or prompts for action that you identify while carrying out the audit.

Information, recommendations and suggested strategies to address any issues are provided below each question.

When you have completed the audit, please keep it for your reference. You may wish to use it to create your own action list, or to use the information to educate staff about the role of the environment in patient care.

If you want to audit more than one location, please print a new copy of this module and complete the audit again for the new location.

Name _____ **Date** _____

Hospital _____

Additional information _____

Sensory and thermal environment

1. **Is noise in and near patient rooms kept to a minimum (especially at night or during rest periods)?**

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - Noise can have a negative impact on patients and their health outcomes due to annoyance, sleep disruption, communication difficulties and stress.

☐ **No** - Noise can have a negative impact on patients and their health outcomes due to annoyance, sleep disruption, communication difficulties and stress. Noise levels of alarms, door bells and telephones should be decreased at night. Loud staff conversations, noise from equipment and overhead announcements should be kept to a minimum, when possible.

☐ **N/A**

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2. **Is the use of public address systems/overhead pager announcements minimised?**

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - Minimising broadcast announcements reduces excess noise and the likelihood of overstimulation.

☐ **No** - Minimising broadcast announcements reduces excess noise and the likelihood of overstimulation. Reduce overhead announcements by using personal pagers, mobile phones and other less intrusive technologies as much as possible.

☐ **N/A**

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3. Are noise levels monitored and actions taken to reduce loud noise?

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - Hospital noise exceeding 30-35 decibel levels is a factor in sleep deprivation, sensory overload, and reduced comfort levels of patients and should be kept to lower levels.

☐ **No** - Hospital noise exceeding 30-35 decibel levels is a factor in sleep deprivation, sensory overload, and reduced comfort levels of patients. Consider changing policies and procedures to reduce the level of noise, including that generated by calling out and loud speaking, background noise and loud disruptive behaviour. Lower the sound of noisy equipment and activity or consider moving it away from patient rooms.

☐ **N/A**

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4. Are there spaces that provide quiet and privacy for patients?

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - There should be spaces that provide privacy and quiet for patients as this helps to reduce stress.

☐ **No** - There should be spaces that provide quiet and privacy for patients as this helps to reduce stress. Consider designating a quiet area for patients to access. If this is not possible, introduce policies that allow patients and families to use other quiet and private areas, for example meeting rooms, and ensure that the availability and procedures for using these are communicated to both staff and patients/families.

☐ **N/A**

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5. Are there policies and procedures in place to minimise the impact of patient generated noise on others, for example television and radio noise?

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - Strategies to minimise the impact of patient generated noise on others can improve patient satisfaction, reduce stress and aid sleep and rest.

☐ **No** - Strategies to minimise the impact of patient generated noise on others can improve patient satisfaction, reduce stress and aid sleep and rest. These could include providing earphones to patients

who wish to watch television or listen to audio, providing earplugs to those who wish for quiet, and having strategies to minimise loud and disruptive behaviour.

☐ **N/A**

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6. Is there a system in place that ensures that purchasing preference is given to the quietest equipment available, and that any unavoidably noisy equipment be located outside of and away from patient rooms?

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - In an effort to promote beneficial sleep and increase patient satisfaction specify the quietest equipment available, especially items within the patient room.

☐ **No** - In an effort to promote beneficial sleep and increase patient satisfaction specify the quietest equipment available, especially items within the patient room. Locate inherently noisy equipment away from patient rooms, if possible.

☐ **N/A**

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7. Are measures taken to reduce hospital smells, particularly within shared wards? This could include implementing policies and procedures that minimise odours generated by cleaning, toileting and waste disposal, and ensuring that relevant staff or contractors abide by them.

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - Exposure to unpleasant odours can increase patient discomfort. Access to fresh air or pleasant aromas should also be available.

☐ **No** - Exposure to unpleasant odours can increase patient discomfort. Access to fresh air or pleasant aromas should also be available.

☐ **N/A**

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8. **Are there strategies in place to maximise opportunities for patients to interact with nature, for example access to gardens, views of nature, or depictions of nature such as pictures or paintings?**

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - Access and views to a well-maintained garden, the ability to touch and smell plants and references to nature within the ward via plants or art/decoration have been shown to reduce anxiety.

☐ **No** - Access and views to a well-maintained garden, the ability to touch and smell plants and references to nature within the ward via plants or decoration have been shown to reduce anxiety. Consider ways that your policies can maximise patient opportunities to experience nature.

☐ **N/A**

Notes

9. **Are there policies in place to maximise the opportunities for patients to experience natural light/daylight while minimising glare?**

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - Daylight is ideal for increasing visibility within spaces. Access to natural light also has benefits for improving mood, orientating patients as to the time of day/night and general wellbeing.

☐ **No** - Daylight is ideal for increasing visibility within spaces. Access to natural light also has benefits for improving mood, orientating patients as to the time of day/night and general wellbeing. Support policies and procedures that allow patients to access areas where they can experience daylight.

☐ **N/A**

Notes

10. **Are there policies about the use of lights at night and systems to ensure patients are shielded from glare or unnecessary light at night?**

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - Lower light levels at night or during rest periods assist sleep.

☐ **No** - Lower light levels at night or during rest periods assist sleep. Consider procedures which ensure that the exposure of patients to bright lights and glare that may interrupt sleep is avoided.

☐ **N/A**

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11. Are there systems in place to ensure that rooms are kept at a temperature that is comfortable for patients through the use of cooling and heating systems? Between 22ºC and 26ºC is recommended by WorkSafe Victoria as being comfortable for sedentary workers.

☐ **Yes** - *Correct* - Heating and cooling should be functional to ensure that rooms do not become excessively hot or cold and to maintain patient safety and comfort.

☐ **No** - Heating and cooling should be functional to ensure that rooms do not become excessively hot or cold and to maintain patient safety and comfort. Consider updating maintenance procedures to ensure that heating/cooling equipment is working and checked regularly, and support policies that stipulate safe minimum and maximum temperature levels for internal environments.

☐ **N/A**

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