HEALTH FACILITIES® MANAGEMENT

TECHNOLOGY & PROCESS INNOVATIONS FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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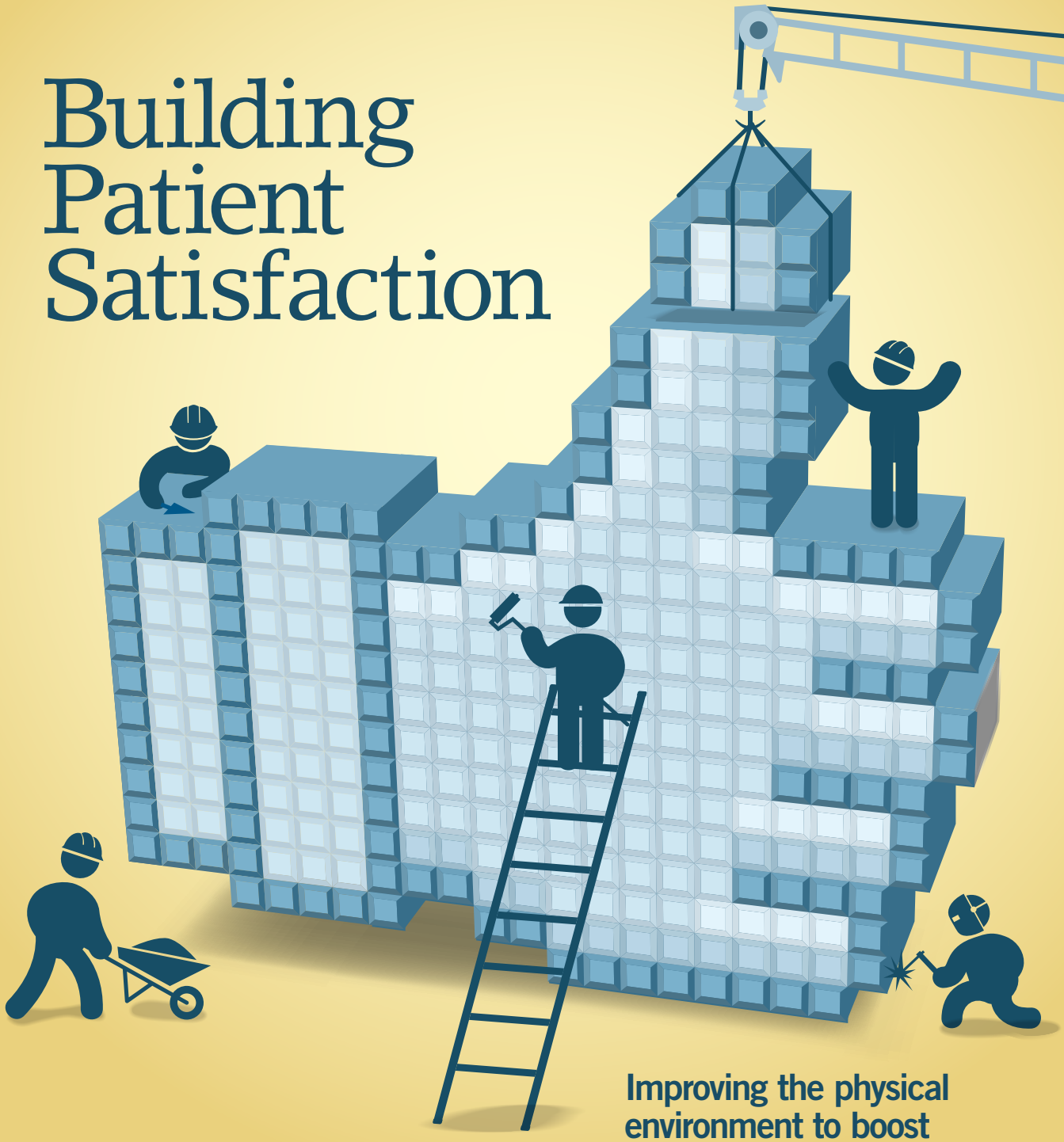
Building Patient Satisfaction



Improving the physical environment to boost HCAHPS scores

American Hospital Association

CODES AND STANDARDS

Barrier protects patients during renovation

Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC), Lewiston, recently undertook a major renovation in and around the facility's emergency department (ED).

The medical center was challenged to perform the work without any interruption in emergency services, while also protecting patients and staff from potentially hazardous airborne particles.

Any construction, renovation and repair activities in hospitals and health care facilities can create or disturb particles, and cause them to become aerosolized. These particles include *Aspergillus* spp., a fungus commonly found in indoor environments that attaches to and feeds on dirt and dust particles and cellulose-based building materials. Patients with suppressed immune systems are especially susceptible to developing aspergillosis, a potentially life-threatening infection.

With health care renovation activity expected to increase 5 to 8 percent over the next two years, according to the Department of Commerce, protecting patients and staff during construction projects will remain an ongoing challenge for hospitals and health care systems.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion provides guidelines that require the health care facility or its general contractor to determine the necessary protective measures for patients and staff during construction.

The requirements are based on an Infection Control Risk Assessment (ICRA) that ranges in severity from Class I to Class IV, with Class IV requiring the most protection against infection. Class IV states that hospitals must "construct barriers to prevent dust from entering patient care areas and ensure that barriers are impermeable to fungal spores and in compliance with local fire codes."

To comply with the ICRA requirement, the renovation required building a 100-foot airtight containment barrier around the construction zone.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF STARC SYSTEMS

Compliance challenge

FACILITY //
Central Maine Medical Center, Lewiston

NEED //
Airtight containment barrier during ED renovation to protect patients from the spread of possible infectious particles

SOLUTION //
STARC (Simple Telescopic Airtight Reusable Containment) Systems

"The traditional method of constructing this large of a containment barrier would have taken two to two-and-a-half days," says Brian Campbell, CHFM, CHC, regional manager of maintenance and construction, CMMC.

To meet the renovation challenge, the medical center chose STARC (Simple Telescopic Airtight Reusable Containment) Systems, Brunswick, Maine, for the required construction barrier.

The STARC system comprises panels and other modules that are quickly installed, relocated or dismantled to provide flexibility. With its efficient, clean installation, the system can reduce labor costs and eliminate dirt typically created with construction of other containment options, according to STARC.

"The whole wall was constructed in less than an hour," Campbell says. "There was no dust, debris or interruption of services during the setup."

Patient and staff satisfaction remained high throughout the renovation due to the effective noise suppression and clean, polished look provided by the containment system.

Daniela Skalina, a CMMC health care and infection control professional for more than 20 years, also praised the system's effectiveness and benefits. "Not only is it aesthetically pleasing, it minimizes risk to patients because it is so easy to set up correctly, and minimizes the opportunity for error, while maintaining an airtight seal around the project."

"This is the best solution I have seen for keeping the patient population protected from noise, dust and any other potentially hazardous materials during renovations or construction in a hospital environment," she adds.

The system's benefits extend beyond exceeding ICRA Class IV requirements, says Chris MacKenzie, executive vice president, STARC Systems. "Because STARC System panels are reusable, hospitals don't create nonbiodegradable waste just to build a temporary containment wall," he says. "These panels are functional for years and can be used on multiple projects."

And, because the system exceeds ICRA Class IV requirements, health care facilities professionals can consider using it for customized critical isolation needs, MacKenzie says. // JEFF FERENC