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Creating a higher standard of healthcare by reducing noise in the environment

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In 1999, my co-author Rita Wynne Herzig, RN and I wrote an article for Nursing Spectrum describing the adverse impacts of noise on health and called for hospitals to address the issue of noise in their facilities by paying attention to the design of new facilities, the rehabilitation of older buildings, the sound levels of medical equipment and alert systems, cleaning equipment and food trays and the lowering of voices and other sound-making activities. While other articles before and after this one noted that hospital noise was a problem and some attempts to lessen hospital noise have been implemented, the need to reduce noise in our overall environment in order to achieve a higher standard of healthcare has not been stressed sufficiently. Literature demonstrating the relationship between noise and hearing loss, cardiovascular disorders, mental health and quality of life has grown considerably these past ten years, providing sufficient evidence to demand a lessening of the din in our surroundings. Additionally, allowing noise to raise the numbers of individuals who are seeking medical health care because of the deleterious effects of noise is also a costly item. My talk will cover the research on noise impacts and the actions that should be taken by those involved in health care, as well as those in the society as a whole, so that sound level standards will be as commonplace as the restrictions on smoking.

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