

AT YOUR DISCRETION

When establishing a medical facility aimed specifically at men, the team at specialist healthcare designers **Levitch Design** says creating a sense of privacy and comfort should be the primary focus.

Men's needs are rarely specifically addressed in our medical sector and it's a fact that men often resist the need to seek medical attention. While this may have much to do with attitudinal factors such as male bravado or even ignorance, it is also worth

considering that men may not feel comfortable visiting practices that don't take their personal, gender-based needs into account.

In many cases the average waiting area is 'decorated' by receptionists who indulge their personal feminine preferences for pretty pastels and pictures of flowers.

Blissfully unaware of

the influence of a service environment on patient experience, the results can often be discomfoting for men.

An effective design brief for any practice should take into account the target market in terms of demographic, gender, physical stature, age, income bracket and general profile. Good designers can then create an environment that not only attracts people who fit the profile but actually addresses their needs throughout the service process.

If a patient has a positive experience, he or she will become loyal patients and are likely to recommend the practice. This practice-building benefit is substantial and should never be underrated.

MAKE IT WORK

In developing the ideal brief for a men's health facility, we recommend the following inclusions:

- A strong and earthy paint scheme
- Natural finishes, such as timber and stone
- Variation in lighting levels to create both brighter and subdued areas
- Easy parking nearby
- Speedy service with minimum waiting periods
- Effective air conditioning
- Generously sized individual chairs positioned away from reception
- A variety of seating options, with armchairs, a coffee bar and private bays
- A seating layout that avoids anyone facing each other or sitting too close, with enough leg room to stretch legs comfortably outside of the transit area
- Access to good coffee, filtered water, newspaper, Wi-Fi and Internet
- A separate booking/payments area for private transactions
- A large TV screen playing programmes with a male focus
- Enough background/white noise to enable a discreet call to be made or taken
- Magazines and/or books on cars, sport, travel, technology and finance.

A final word of warning: If an environment is too 'blokey' it may encourage a sense of alpha-male invincibility. The key is to make men feel comfortable while simultaneously giving them 'unconscious' permission to share the fact that they are feeling a little less than perfect. ☺



Anne Levitch (above) and Genna Levitch are Directors of Levitch Design Associates.

Photos courtesy of Levitch Design Associates.