

12 Reasons to Have a Labyrinth at Your Hospital

1) Labyrinths offer inner healing, which is complementary to technological outer healing. Science can do a good job in patching up our bodies, but does not deal with the emotional and psychological aspects of illness, which also need healing. Combining both inner and outer healing offers the fullest range of benefits to the patient.

2) Being subjective in nature, labyrinths go to places where objective science can't go (nor is it interested in going). One speaks a language that is literal and precise, the other a language that is metaphorical and amorphous. The languages are completely different. That's why science isn't the standard by which labyrinths should be judged. Hospitals should want labyrinths expressly because they are not scientific. They can successfully transform the experience of illness or injury even when the medical outcome falls short.

3) Labyrinths comprise a healing space, often within a healing garden, where people can refresh and renew themselves, meditate, pray, and get centered. This is true even if the labyrinth may be within hearing distance of traffic or other noises. Complete silence is not a requirement.

4) By walking labyrinths, patients can gain a proactive attitude towards their healing process and treatment. Often they feel left out and powerless, lost in the medical system. By participating in their own process, they are more likely to take an interest and be empowered, making them more likely to follow through with their responsibilities.



Regional Hospital, Carson City, NV

5) Labyrinths help employees handle the anxiety and tension which so frequently accompanies their positions. Rather than a cigarette break, they can take a short relaxation break. Plus, walking the labyrinth can help one to decompress after a hard day, thereby arriving home calmer and in a good mood.

6) In labyrinths, families and friends can find relief for their concern about the ways in which one person's illness can affect everyone in the family. Some hospitals put labyrinths next to the emergency room, to help people pass time during the agonizing wait while a loved one is receiving care. Staff who encounter stressed family members can suggest that they walk the labyrinth. Similarly, the labyrinth is excellent for helping people face their grieving process after experiencing a loss.

7) Labyrinths can help clinicians to achieve a sense of focus and calmness before performing procedures. Doctors have been known to walk a labyrinth prior to entering surgery, to calm themselves and steady their hands. One hospital even had the board of directors walk a labyrinth before a potentially contentious meeting.

8) By installing a public labyrinth, hospitals enhance their outreach to the community by offering a valuable wellness tool available to all. This successfully brings people into contact with (and appreciation for) the hospital. A labyrinth identifies the hospital as caring for each individual's well-being, be they patients, staff, visitors, or the community at large.



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9) Compared to the cost of other modalities, labyrinths are very cost effective. Unlike other types of integrative treatments, the labyrinth doesn't require staffing (as do massage or healing touch, for example). Some hospitals have placed the labyrinth in the central space between their existing building and their new cancer center. (Photo: Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital in Wheaton, IL. Plan By Stephen Rankin Associates. Labyrinth installation by Labyrinth Enterprises, LLC.) The labyrinth is a cost-effective, low maintenance, holistic tool.

Photo:

Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital in Wheaton, IL.

The plan, by Stephen Rankin Associates, connects the old hospital, new hospital, and new parking garage with a common subterranean level, opened up by an atrium for light.

*Labyrinth installation by
Labyrinth Enterprises, LLC*



10) The labyrinth affords an ecumenical, interfaith, or generic environment for persons of diverse cultures and traditions. It can be used simply for meditation or well-being, or it can be used within a number of traditional religious formats. Its broad appeal and application makes the labyrinth appropriate in almost all settings.

11) Hundreds of hospitals now have labyrinths. It is no longer necessary to be a pioneer. Their value has been well verified. Most progressive healthcare institutions realize that their clients want holistic care, and want to address their spiritual as well as physical needs. Labyrinths offer hospitals a broader, more holistic, range of possibilities. This is reflected in improved satisfaction from patients and visitors, which has positive effects on the bottom line. In short, labyrinths are good business.

12) A labyrinth offers a creative space for rites, rituals, memorials, and celebrations for individuals and groups, the hospital itself and the community. In one hospital, a much loved doctor died suddenly of a heart attack. That evening, the staff met at the labyrinth and had a candlelight walk in his memory. Labyrinths build and share community and esprit de corps. Hospital labyrinths have been used by the local community for support groups, butterfly releases, and many other activities both solemn and festive. Since the labyrinth is a blank slate, it lends itself to many possibilities.

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