

Elyssa Chung

Dr. Stephen Fernandez

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### Hospitals Are Labyrinths- Good Luck If You're Terrible with Directions

The design problem that I've chosen has to do with in-hospital navigation. With hospitals in Toronto, often they are large enough where getting lost is easy. To combat this navigation issue, there are signs and maps set periodically throughout the buildings. Other methods used for navigation also involve following a coloured line on the floor of the building (although, this method is rarer to find).

With the usage of signs, maps, and coloured lines, they can inhibit inclusion and reinforce exclusionary social practices. Sometimes signs are placed too far apart that it can be questionable if one is still following the right path. Other times, if not being able to orient towards a visible landmark on the floor, reading a map proves useless. That said, all the methods listed rely on the necessity for sight. This necessity for sight alienates people who are visually impaired, while also stacking on an unnecessary mental load towards those in high adrenaline/stressful situations (ex. nurses on-call, doctors/surgeons on long shifts between emergencies, other patients visiting their loved ones etc.).

For those that are visually impaired, these cracks in the initial navigation solution can prove to alienate them the most. Sometimes going up to a stranger to ask for help can be daunting. Additionally, sometimes the people at the help desk would be too

busy to provide any proper aid. Lastly, there are times when being at the hospital, a person just doesn't want to interact with anyone. Thus, when needing to travel by one's self and being visually impaired to the point of not being able to see these signs, choosing to aimlessly wander around a hospital until one accidentally stumbles into the area they need to be in isn't exactly an option.

To remedy this issue, the design intervention of in-hospital navigation for a visually impaired user needs to be multi-sensory. It might be worthwhile to consider adding different raised patterns into each of the different coloured lines, although this might impede mobility for patients (especially when relying on wheelchairs and gurneys to transport patients between wards or during emergencies). Another option could be relying on the downloading of an app that allows for the vibration of a smart device to help users know if they're on track to the ward they would like to get to (like a metal detector for a navigation route).

Overall, people who are visually impaired suffer the most from in-hospital navigation design solutions. The options used to solve this design issue relies too much on sight, thus running the risk of alienating this community as well as those who already face a heavy mental load.