The Ottawa Hospital
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Like many hospitals today, The Ottawa Hospital was challenged with renovating older, underused spaces and updating them to support new and better ways of delivering health care in ambulatory care environments. Creating a welcoming place for patients and providing a flexible workspace for staff were all key elements of the project. Herman Miller’s Compass™ System proved to be an ideal solution.

Since 2011, The Ottawa Hospital has been undergoing a major, multi-phase renovation which clearly illustrates the challenges many hospitals are facing today. Three in particular stand out:

1. Renovating older spaces, often designed for acute in-patient care, into spaces that support and enhance ambulatory care.
2. Making those spaces more welcoming and comfortable for patients while maintaining Infection Prevention Control (IPC) requirements.
3. Making the spaces as flexible as possible to allow for change to the physical space.
Case Study

“Our basic philosophy was to create as many non ‘clinical’ settings as possible; eliminate the starkness and make it a warmer, more soothing environment, so that it’s a calming experience for patients,” states Frank Medwenitsch, Director, Planning & Capital Projects at The Ottawa Hospital.

“We wanted a completely new look to show that we are an up-to-date hospital delivering up-to-date care,” adds Sarah Carkner, Design Coordinator at the hospital, who oversaw the design elements of the project. “At the same time, we wanted a more comfortable feel, without the typical—and inflexible—built-in casework.”

Preparing For Changes Large And Small

Phase one of the renovation would entail creating two separate and distinct ambulatory care environments. One would include a Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Centre, Vascular Surgery Clinic, Infectious Disease Clinic, and Wound Healing Centre created from space that was previously a cancer centre. The second would be new Thrombosis and Urology clinics in spaces that previously housed a lab and offices. The renovated spaces would also include five Procedure Rooms.

The spaces all varied greatly in size and shape. Flexibility was critical; the hospital wanted to be able to change the spaces easily on both micro and macro levels, from individual rooms that might need slight adjustments to improve functionality, to entire clinics that may need to be completely reconfigured/repurposed in the future.

As Ginny Winiker, Regional Account Manager, Herman Miller Healthcare, points out, “More and more hospitals today are finding that reconfigurable, adaptable components are a great solution for outpatient clinics that have a high potential for change in processes and procedures.”
The Ottawa Hospital

The “splashless” Corian® sink, part of the Compass System, helps minimize the spread of infection and is extremely durable.

Flexible, Adaptable

Given the challenges the hospital faced, Catherine McTernan, designer at Ottawa Business Interiors, the local Herman Miller dealership, felt that Herman Miller’s Compass system would be an ideal solution on all fronts. “It is a modular kit of parts that is extremely flexible and adaptable,” says McTernan. “Unlike millwork, which is usually drawn from wall to wall and fits in every nook and cranny, Compass is wall-hung and ‘floats’ on the wall, allowing it to fit into each room’s unique space,” she explains. “So from a design perspective, it made my job easy; when you’re drawing it out, you just create the typical elevation and ‘drop’ it into wherever it needs to go in that particular room, regardless of its size or shape.”

That Compass can be quickly removed, reorganized, and refreshed without demolition or lengthy downtime gives a hospital the ability to handle change gracefully while maintaining high levels of care. Hospitals can choose to pre-wire, pre-plumb, and pre-pipe behind Compass tiles, making it easier to access and maintain services without the mess, downtime, and IPC issues that come with tearing out walls. And, the way Compass is designed—up off the floor—makes it easy to clean around and under.

Eliminating Potential Hazards

Compass also features a “splashless” sink which helps minimize the spread of infection. In fact, McTernan says the sink is “the shining star” of the Compass system.

"With porcelain sinks, whether dropped into the millwork or wall hung, you always had the potential for mold, because the seal is only as good as the caulking you put around it. Sooner or later there’s a leak,” says Medwenitsch. “So we’re moving to Corian countertops with integrated sinks because it eliminates that potential hazard; they’re also very durable.”

Winiker notes the Compass tiles and surfaces are also durable and designed with housekeeping in mind. “The shingled design on the tile keeps liquids from seeping into the infrastructure and the materials were designed to withstand frequent cleaning with harsh cleaners.”
Case Study

Static Versus Fluid

As if to test Compass’s flexibility factor, some minor tweaks were required soon after staff began working in the new spaces. Compass passed with flying colors. “It was as simple as removing storage components and positioning them to better support the staff requirements, or replacing them with something else, using very few tools,” says McTernan. “Best of all, the hospital doesn’t have to shut down the clinic to make changes. They can do it quickly while continuing to treat patients.”

In fact, says Medwenitsch, “we went in over a weekend and made some adjustments after we moved in. We could never have done that with traditional built in millwork. Change is an inherent part of our world, and where millwork is static, Compass is fluid. We didn’t have a huge mess or debris to deal with afterwards, either.”

Storage Solutions

Herman Miller also modified some of the Compass storage solutions, making them deeper for supply-heavy areas, such as exam rooms. Co/Struc, another Herman Miller reconfigurable system that includes storage carts and cabinets, filled in where needed. “The hospital doesn’t have space for central storage, nor the staff for frequent restocking, so with the modifications and Co/Struc we were able to meet all their needs,” says Winiker.

Medwenitsch says Compass was a great match aesthetically as well. “We were using a lot of wood to get the warmth we wanted, along with artwork and other amenities, and the light scale of Compass makes the rooms feel open and spacious.”

Compass fits into spaces of all shapes and sizes and because it’s off the floor, it’s easy to clean around, too.
Excellent Dealer Service

Both Carkner and Medwenitsch are quick to praise Ottawa Business Interior’s excellent service. “Cathy’s drawings were very clear and made it easy for me to explain to people exactly what we were doing, which is a huge part of my job,” observes Carkner. “It’s sometimes hard for non-designers to visualize how it’s going to look and support work processes, so the drawings really helped.”

Plus, she says, “Anytime we had changes —and we had tons— Cathy turned it around quickly, helping us find economic solutions when we couldn’t figure out what to do.”

“We have a long history with Ottawa Business Interiors, and they’re always great to work with,” agrees Medwenitsch, adding that the mock-ups they provided were also a big help. “It not only gave the staff a chance to see how Compass works, it also helped the facilities people, contractors, plumbers, and carpenters understand how the system works,” says McTernan. “They could see how solid the system is, and how easy it is to access the utilities and services.”

Now that they’ve had a chance to work in the spaces a while, “staff members are very appreciative of their new environments,” says Medwenitsch. “Compass is a very robust product and they have embraced it; they’re very pleased with how well it interfaces with their work process and supports patient care delivery.”

Carkner feels the hospital succeeded in every way. “What we were trying to do was improve the staff, patient and family experience through the environment. It looks very fresh, clean and modern and it makes people feel not only calm and welcome, but like they’re in a place where high quality patient care really matters.”

Flexible Flo® Monitor Supports allow staff to get their work up off the surface and enables each user to adjust for proper posture.
Case Study

**Topics**
- Brand
- Ergonomics
- Performance

**Applications**
- Ambulatory Care
- Caregiver Work Environments
- Exam Room
- Patient Care

**Project Scope**
- 3 Phases
- 15,000 sq. ft.
  - General Campus:
    - 22 exam rooms
    - 2 procedure rooms
  - Civic Campus:
    - 27 exam rooms
    - 3 procedure rooms

**Herman Miller Products**
- Action Office® System
- Ethospace® System
- Compass System
- Co/Struc System
- Flo Monitor Supports

**Programs/Services**
- Easy OptionsSM Capability
- Mock-up Program

**Year Completed**
- Ongoing

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