

Contractors' Experience Can Help Guide Health Care Projects



**Mary Warner
COOK**

Think of a contractor as a resource.

The experience a contractor gains from multi-

of projects with varying customers, settings and situations can be used to an owner's benefit. The lessons learned from building others' health care facilities, whether they are hospitals, imaging centers or veterinarian offices, can be applied when you decide to build. This is true regardless of your level of experience. If you are a seasoned purchaser with responsibilities for multiple facilities or a

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sole practitioner building your first dental office, you stand to benefit from your contractor's gained knowledge.

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the table early, is focused on the end use and understands your business, the result will be a better facility. Probing and listening are key components to understanding your needs. A contractor who pushes you to think hard about what is important, what is necessary, your future plans, your patients' needs and other significant aspects of your business will likely give you a better project at a better price.

Owners and purchasers often do not know what they do not know. A contractor's collective knowledge can be applied, essentially learning from others' experiences. The knowledge attained by building a palliative care facility and the nature of that type of room allows the contractor to suggest adjustments to benefit the patients. Applying experience with acoustical control can improve the quali-

ty of life in a shared living environment.

Moving sinks out of exam rooms to a shared location can have a significant cost savings. A contractor who is willing to challenge an owner's plans and ideas is likely to provide that owner with a better product at a lower price.

Health care providers can lean on the contractor to realize cost savings by getting them involved early in the process. When pricing is available as you are making design decisions, you can quickly make adjustments before the design is completed. If a nursing home believes it may need to add oxygen to patient rooms, this can be prepared now for future use, at a significant savings to renovations in the future. If a medical office building may require a future generator for emergency electric, a panel may be added now, pre-

venting an overhaul of the electric system in the future. Understanding what it will cost to build in oxygen units early in the process can help a palliative care home decide that using mobile units is a better selection. Having a contractor probing, planning and providing real-time pricing is a significant benefit to health care providers.

Health care providers stand to benefit if they put their contractor to work intellectually. Contractors' understanding of building options, costs and materials can become a significant value to an owner. The value is there if the contractor is at the table early and engaged throughout all phases of building process.

Mary Warner Cook is the business development director for Pray Construction Co.



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