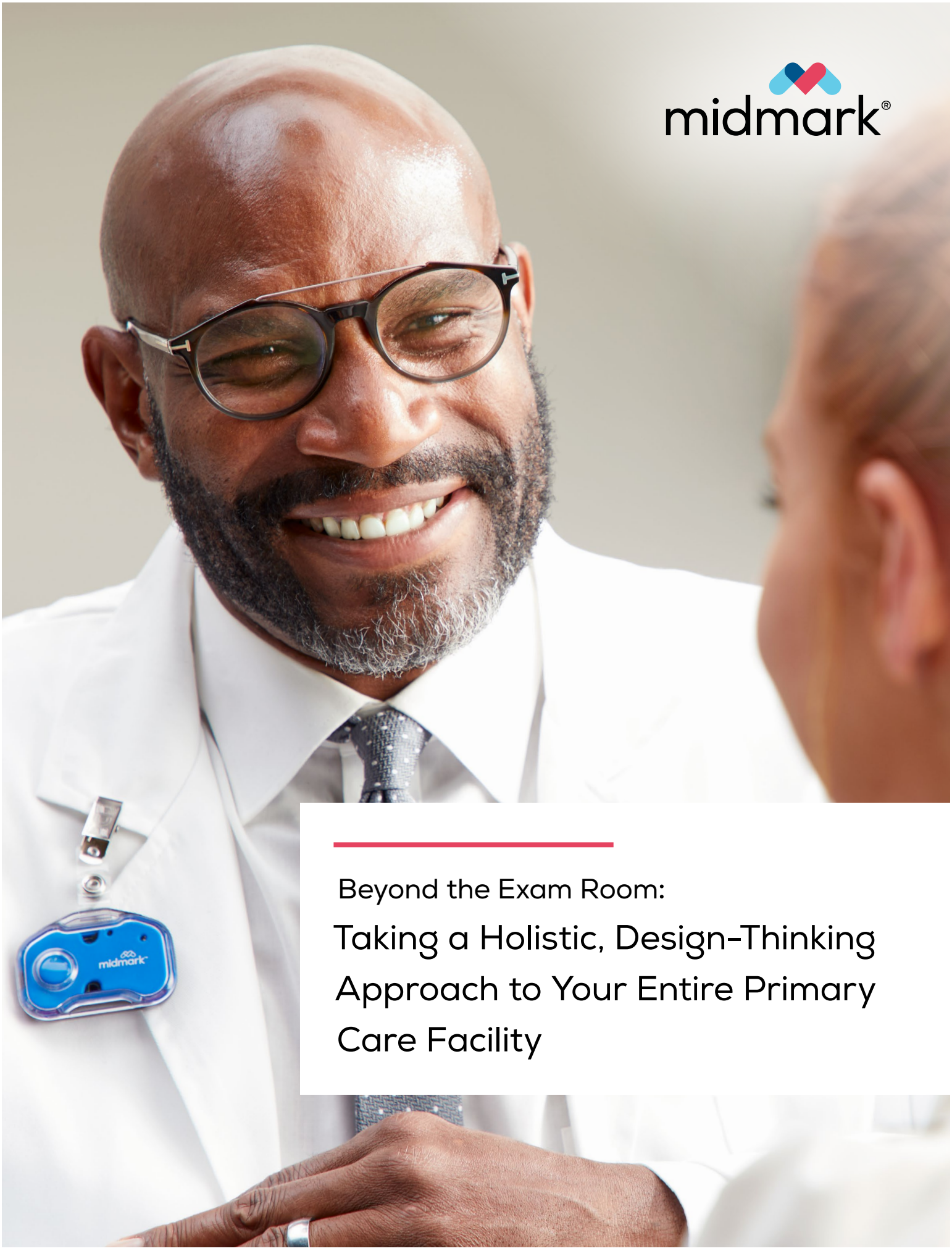


Beyond the Exam Room:

Taking a Holistic, Design-Thinking Approach to Your Entire Primary Care Facility

During recent years, there has been a growing shift in healthcare to place more attention on design and user experience. Many in the industry now have a shared realization of the power of design to transform and strengthen the healthcare experience for both providers and patients, especially in primary care environments.

Midmark has been on the forefront of that shift, helping providers and healthcare systems understand that better care starts with a better-designed experience. We have been helping them take a more holistic, design-thinking approach to the point of care. This includes utilizing evidence-based design (EBD) to ensure design decisions are based on proven research and best practices.

Until recently, much of that focus has been on the exam room. In this Midmark white paper, we explain how that same design approach should be taken throughout the entire primary care facility.

Impactful Clinical Design

As with the exam room, the layout and configuration of the entire facility, including the equipment and furniture it contains, can significantly impact the effectiveness of any clinical space.

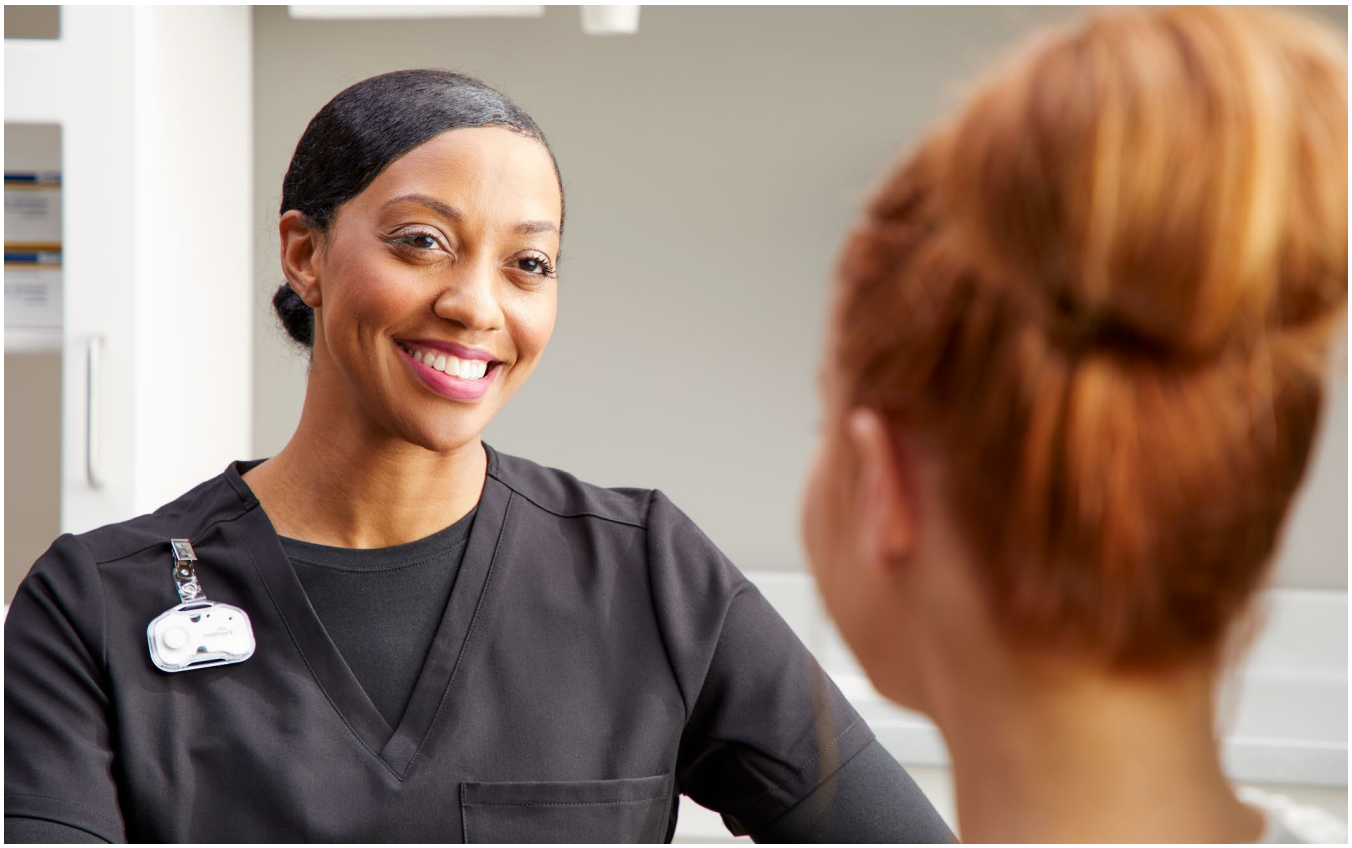
Effective clinical design is more than just aesthetics. It's about finding a balance between comfort and functionality that enhances healthcare experiences, increases operational efficiencies and improves clinical outcomes. Good clinical design does not happen by accident—it takes expertise and the specific reasoning that expert designers develop through practical experience and training.

That is why when Midmark design consultation experts work directly with project architects, contractors and interior designers, it elevates the value of clinical design. This collaboration helps ensure facility design and room configurations align with equipment and furniture needs, and desired workflows are achievable. Often when they are brought into a project in the early stages, Midmark design experts solve issues customers did not know they had and offer options they are not aware are available.

Holistic Clinical Design Approach

To ensure impactful clinical design in and outside the exam room, the entire primary care facility should be based on a holistic clinical design approach. This includes everything from procedure rooms, instrument processing areas and labs, to staff areas, waiting rooms and telehealth spaces. This approach, which has been adopted in numerous primary care environments, incorporates and equally elevates the following three main components:

1. **Facility design** in which the configuration of the exam rooms and the layout of the equipment inside those rooms positively impact the effectiveness and safety of the clinical space. Consideration given to ergonomics and mobility issues helps ensure a safer and more comfortable experience for patients, clinicians and clinical staff.
2. **Workflow design** that moves beyond the typical linear design of care environments to focus on patients creates a better care experience. A more patient-centered workflow design allows for better patient management and limits unnecessary patient interactions and movement throughout the facility.
3. **Technology/equipment design** that is specifically suited for clinical environments increases the level of efficiency, flexibility, safety and comfort. This means equipment that can withstand the rigors of daily use and strike the right balance of clinical functionality and comfort. It also means technology that, when integrated into the environment, positively impacts patient-provider interaction.



A guiding principle of this approach is evidence-based design (EBD). According to the Center for Health Design, EBD is the process of basing decisions about a built environment on credible research to achieve the best possible patient, staff and operational outcomes. As greater attention and focus are being placed on the interaction between the patient and caregiver at the ambulatory point of care, EBD is being more frequently used in clinical design, including exam rooms and hospitals.

Taking an EBD approach when designing primary care environments elevates the strategic importance of equipment, room layout and design decisions and ensures they are based on proven research and best practices. It helps healthcare organizations and their design partners create a healthcare environment conducive to achieving better outcomes through enhanced patient/caregiver experience, standardization and interaction at the point of care.

One of the strengths of the EBD approach lies in the simple fact that it links equipment and design decisions directly to desired clinical outcomes.

For tips on implementing an evidence-based approach to the design of a care environment, read the Midmark white paper "Taking an Evidence-Based Design Approach into the Healthcare Environment."

Tips for Ensuring a Holistic, Clinical Design Approach

The following are five tips to help you take a holistic, clinical design approach that is impactful to your entire primary care facility.

1. Design your space to enhance proper workflow and standardization.

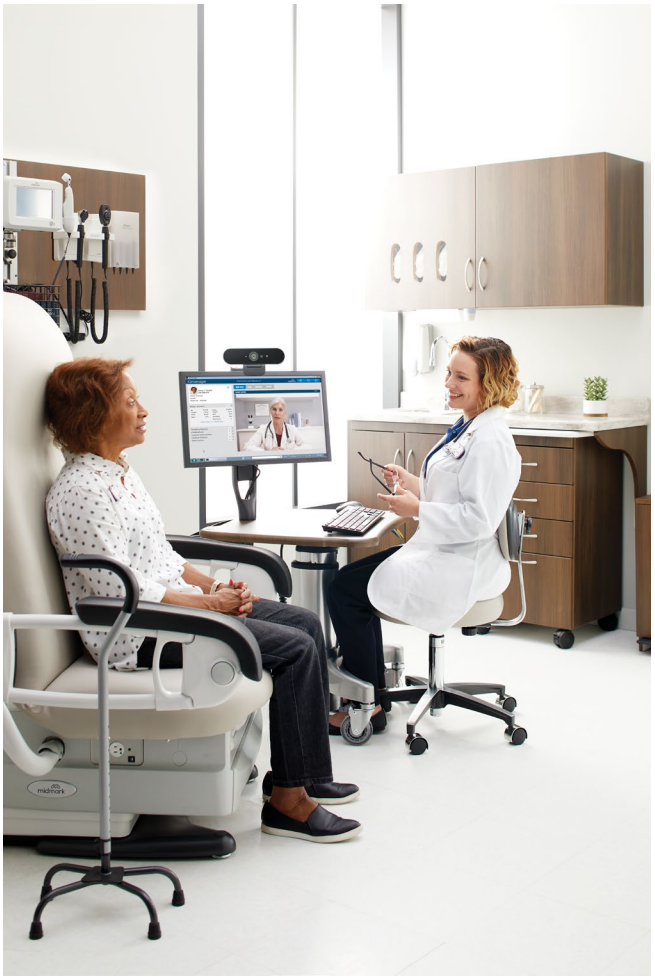
Your outpatient facility, and the equipment and furniture you utilize throughout it, should be designed to enhance workflow and standardization. This includes cabinetry that features a modular design so it is easily configurable and can seamlessly integrate into existing workflows to maximize available space.

This also includes storage options, such as mobile procedure carts and mobile treatment cabinets, that can easily integrate into exam room configurations and workflows, increasing storage space and bringing supplies to the point of care. For instance, mobile procedure carts are designed to assist in exam supply access and storage within the treatment area. They allow for sturdy room-to-room maneuverability and can be customized for specific workflows and procedures, offering an optimal platform for supporting the delivery of care and making the most of available space.

A holistic design approach is especially important to maintain workflow and standardization when it comes to your instrument processing area. Even with a designated area for instrument processing, the workflow design needs to be organized efficiently. Implementing a dirty-to-clean instrument processing workflow as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) can help contain contamination and maximize the efficiency of your instrument cleaning and sterilizing process. Having the right cabinetry configuration is vital to ensure standardization and efficiency is achieved.

2. Identify product design that offers flexibility to evolve with your changing needs.

Whether it's setting up a telehealth area, introducing new technologies or establishing new workflows, it is important you have equipment that can offer flexibility to evolve your facility and services as your patients' needs change.



For instance, mobile workstations should be designed to provide the flexibility needed to support a digital ecosystem that puts accurate, actionable and relevant data at the physician's fingertips. Mobile workstations can centralize the digital ecosystem, providing healthcare organizations with a flexible solution for integrating connected technology and bringing data to the point of care without sacrificing workflow. Most workstations have accessories that can be added, based on need, to support and manage technology integration at a very basic level.

Mobile workstations are also portable and can be moved from room to room with ease, allowing for flexibility and accessibility at all times. They can be placed in any position within the room to fit the needs of the provider and best serve the needs of the patient.

3. Utilize products designed to support your staff's safety and well-being.

On a normal day, working in a primary care environment can be a physically and mentally demanding experience. It is not uncommon for many caregivers to routinely go home with back pain, aching necks or sore muscles and joints. This is often the result of caregivers continuously working in uncomfortable positions, utilizing poor ergonomics while accessing supplies, interacting with equipment or patients, or entering information into electronic medical records (EMR).

For instance, equipment designed with ergonomic principles can help create a more positive experience for clinical staff and providers throughout your primary care facility. This can include cabinetry, such as Synthesis® Wall-Hung Cabinetry, that is designed for average height healthcare workers, enabling caregivers to easily reach frequently accessed supplies without unnecessary bending, stretching or constant overreaching.

It can also include clinician stools that are easily adjustable and maneuverable to allow providers to find the most comfortable working height and maintain neutral postures while also offering a backrest to promote better posture and support the back.

4. Purchase equipment and furniture designed to withstand clinical environments.

It is important that equipment and furniture used in your outpatient facility are designed to withstand the rigors of daily use in a healthcare environment while striking the right balance of clinical functionality and aesthetics.

Design elements that can play a part in infection prevention efforts are especially important, given the enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols implemented in clinical environments due to heightened awareness about the transmission of multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs).

This is especially important when it comes to the cabinetry used throughout your facility. Choosing cabinetry that is specifically designed to withstand the rigors and meet the specialized needs of clinical environments can provide long-term value while also reducing additional costs.

Cabinetry that is created specifically for the medical environment should feature an easy-to-clean, seamless design using antimicrobial handles and surfaces that can help protect from infections. Medical-grade cabinetry should also use steel-on-steel construction with powder-coated paint and a thermofoil wrap to limit seams so the cabinetry can be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly. This base structure also can help the cabinetry better withstand breakdown from repeated use of medical-grade cleaners.

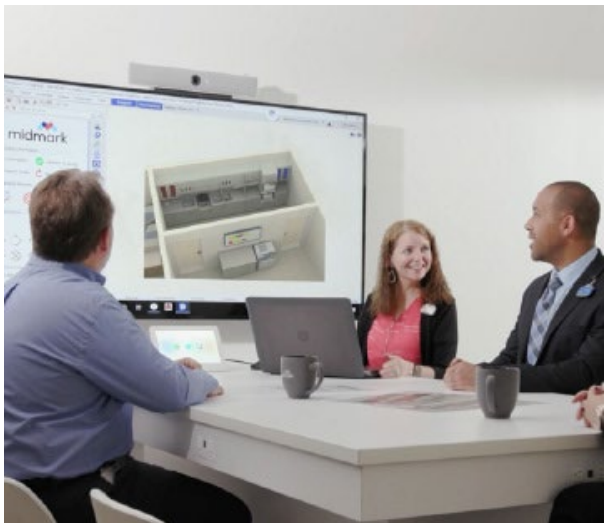
5. Partner with your equipment provider early in the facility design process.

Not only is it important to work with an equipment provider that has clinical design experience and expertise, but also you need to involve the provider early in the project, especially for a new facility build or retrofit of an existing facility.

This helps ensure facility design and room configurations align with equipment and furniture needs, and desired workflows are achievable. More importantly, it helps elevate the value that facility design, workflow design and technology/equipment design can play in enhancing healthcare experiences, improving clinical outcomes and increasing operational efficiencies.

For instance, Midmark provides a variety of benefits to the design phase through our Midmark Live Design process. Often, we solve issues customers did not know they had and offer options they are not aware are available.

Midmark recently worked with Columbia Medical Practice (CMP) to repurpose an existing structure it leased for its new space, completely redesigning and renovating it to create a modern, custom-designed medical hub. The CMP team visited the Midmark Experience Center to tour the medical venue and discuss design elements and best practices during the Midmark Live Design session. The Midmark design recommendations that came out of this visit were then shared with the architects handling the renovation project.



Clinical design has become a powerful and strategically indispensable tool to transform and optimize the point of care ecosystem. Taking a holistic, clinical design-thinking approach to your entire primary care facility can help strengthen the healthcare experience for both providers and patients, improve clinical outcomes and increase operational efficiencies. To learn more, visit midmark.com/ContactUs.

Designing better care.®

midmark®

007-10512-00 Rev. A1