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Applying design thinking for community-provider collaboration: Designing a culture- and user-friendly refugee wellness center

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Applying design thinking for community-provider collaboration: Designing a culture- and user-friendly refugee wellness center

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Background: Designing South Philadelphia's first permanent healthcare facility dedicated to immigrant and refugee health presents a unique opportunity to integrate cultural sensitivity with principles of community health. Philadelphia is a city saturated with many medical institutions and hospitals, yet there are large health disparities within miles of each other.

Bringing together healthcare providers with a common goal of improving community health needs from a cultural standpoint can be tasking, even when all are on the same page. Design thinking is an underexplored perspective that has the potential to address these concerns in an efficient way that improves both provider and patient satisfaction.

Objective: Using Design thinking to transform the Hansjorg- Wyss wellness center into a culturally diverse and welcoming environment for patients will ultimately improve healthcare outcomes for the immigrant population in Philadelphia.

Methods: Seven focus groups were conducted to gather insight and feedback from patient populations, community partners, architects, and healthcare providers. We conducted a healthcare "design sprint," with the various stakeholders involved to implement design thinking to ideate solutions for the new wellness center

Results: Common barriers to access to healthcare reported in the focus groups include: lack of adequate language interpretation, long wait times, and transportation issues. Common findings among the different focus groups were a desire for services such as health education, spaces for community events, mental health services, and activities for children. Design sessions produced prototypes acceptable to community and staff and suitable for use by architects.

Conclusions: Design thinking is a useful tool to merge community interests with healthcare delivery when building a culturally sensitive wellness center.