

P-36 | Better Physical Frameworks in Psychiatry– A Study of the Importance of the Environment for Psychiatric Patients' Recovery



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The global need for improved mental health treatment is vast (Holmes et al., 2018). Research has consistently shown that the physical environment is essential for both physical and mental health (Sallis et al., 2016; Connellan et al., Gross et al.). However, identifying specific architectural solutions that enhance mental health remains challenging, especially in psychiatry. Only 14 research projects have explored the link between physical environments and mental health, with few focusing on outdoor spaces. This gap highlights the need for more research, particularly in Denmark.

Denmark faces a growing challenge with mental health disorders, and the number of diagnosed cases is expected to rise (Danske Patienter, 2020). It is unclear whether this increase reflects more mental illness or improved diagnostic methods. Additionally, many psychiatric treatment centers in Denmark feature uninspiring outdoor areas. Studies suggest that patients with stress-related illnesses show reduced symptoms and higher well-being when exposed to nature as part of their treatment (Sahlin et al., 2015). Therefore, improving outdoor spaces to encourage activity and relaxation presents a significant opportunity to enhance both mental and physical health.

There is a growing recognition that mental illness represents a phase of life where individuals are neither fully sick nor healthy. Recovery focuses on creating new meaning and purpose in life as patients navigate the consequences of mental illness (Boardman et al., 2008).

This research project aims to improve outdoor facilities for patients in psychiatric institutions by combining multidisciplinary knowledge and architectural quality. Traditionally, psychiatric treatment focuses on therapy and medication, but there is increasing interest in integrating nature-based interventions such as horticultural therapy to support recovery.

The project would specifically investigate the connection between the physical environment of a psychiatric hospital in Denmark and the physical and mental health of patients. This would be done through physical interventions, evaluating the use of outdoor spaces before and after an architectural process. Two different wards were selected with different patient groups, young and seniors. Both wards wanted better outdoor spaces around their ward.