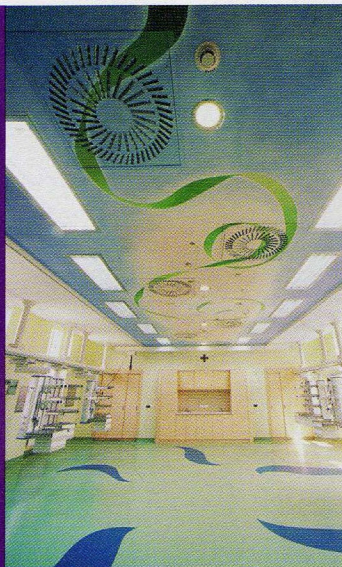


## feng shui

## WIND AND WATER

DOES CHINESE FENG SHUI IMPROVE HEALTH?



Austria – In 1998, the urology department at Lainz hospital, Vienna, was the first in the country to be designed according to Chinese feng shui principles. Concluding that the results were positive, in 2002, the hospital redesigned its cardiac and intensive care units, as well as, more recently, the urology outpatient department.

The hospital reported that the new spatial concept created a relaxing and healing atmosphere that significantly improved outcome: 'While meeting all technical and functional requirements the outpatient department was redesigned to make patients and staff feel well. Negative feelings commonly associated with a hospital, such as fear and discomfort need to be replaced by the opposite: joy, positive life energy and calmness.'

In China, Feng Shui (meaning wind and water) was traditionally used to placate the ghosts of air and water. Feng shui is still widely used in modern China – a feng shui master is consulted for practically every major building project – and the concept is increasingly used in Western architecture and interior design.

The basic idea is that whilst we influence our environment our environment also influences us. Believing all elements are interconnected, and that changes in colour, movement, light, plants, and sounds all have an effect on the air and therefore humans within their range, those who believe in feng shui profess that the thoughtful, harmonious positioning of the elements surrounding us can positively affect human feelings, moods and health.

Thus, to design a room, building, garden, or their inter-connecting areas harmoniously, the way energy (chi) flows through these must be considered, so as to eliminate negative energies. Sharp edges are to be avoided and symmetrical arrangements are favoured.

The hospital explained that the core elements of feng shui are yin and yang (the principle of dualism), the bagua which is a 'road map' that divides space into nine sections corresponding with the nine areas of life, and the five elements (fire, water, wood, metal and earth).

Water plays an important role in feng shui because, they say, it can improve the flow of energy. Water is the element associated with urology; consequently the lounge of the outpatient department features a fountain and aquarium. Water also washes away fear. In Chinese philosophy fear is linked to the element water, so are the kidney and bladder. That means urology patients often deal with emotional fear and trust issues, so creating a trust-building and trust-enhancing environment is an important measure.

Colours also play an important role. 'Orange and yellow for example convey a joy for living; pink is connected to love and green to abundance. Because green is also the strongest healing colour (earth), it was particularly suited for the outpatient department, the hospital explained. The pastel mint colour, also used, promotes communication skills, strengthens creativity and refreshes the air. The combination of several colours creates life and joy and widens the range of possibilities.'