



**Healthcare  
Infra**

Why less is more in  
hospital design

# EXPRESS HEALTHCARE

INDIA'S FOREMOST HEALTHCARE MAGAZINE SINCE 2000

JANUARY, 2026, ₹50



SPECIAL ISSUE

**Interview**

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# 25

## PRIORITIES: ONE HEALTHCARE FUTURE

As the nation sets its sights on Viksit Bharat 2047, Express Healthcare's anniversary edition examines 25 healthcare priorities that will define the next era



## Why less is more in hospital design

**Arti Gugnani**, Partner, Vijay Gupta Architects (VGA) stresses that simplicity is not minimalism for its own sake. It is a measured approach that clears the path by removing visual noise, resolving confusing circulation, and shaping spaces that work with the pace of care

In architecture, the phrase “Less is More” appears often, yet its deepest resonance is felt in healthcare design. Hospitals are layered environments where emotions shift quickly, precision matters every moment, and well-being shapes every decision. As advancements surge and medical infrastructure grows, the idea of expanding facilities or adding newer elements tends to dominate the conversation. But a quieter principle holds enormous power: creating space that breathes, guides, and supports. Sometimes, the most meaningful transformation emerges when design steps back and allows clarity to lead.

### The case for simplicity in hospital design

A hospital is an ecosystem shaped by the rhythms of patients, caregivers, clinical staff, and families. Design becomes a tool for creating ease in situations that often feel overwhelming. When spaces feel intuitive, and environments stay calm, people navigate their journeys with greater confidence. Simplicity is not minimalism for its own sake. It is a measured approach that clears the path by removing visual noise, resolving confusing circulation, and shaping spaces that work with the pace of care. A simplified plan also strengthens daily operations. Clear axes and legible zoning prevent unwanted overlap in movement. This has a direct bearing on infection control and on the daily flow of activities that keep a hospital functioning. When circulation patterns make sense immediately, the building supports both emotional comfort and operational clarity.

### The science behind “Less” in healing spaces

Organised, uncluttered environments help people understand where they are and what lies ahead. Cognitive load reduces



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when visual cues are coherent. Anxiety eases when light, air, and natural views enter the frame. Healthcare research continues to show that calm spatial environments support better healing. These ideas are not abstract; they surface in small everyday moments.

My own time as a caregiver to my parents sharpened this understanding. The ability to see the sky from a corridor window, the sound of leaves moving out-

side a patient room, even the soft wash of natural daylight across a wall, these elements shaped the emotional atmosphere and allowed space to hold the weight of difficult days.

Biophilic cues give orientation, create rhythm, and help patients and caregivers settle into an environment that feels less clinical and more humane. These gestures also help staff sustain their energy through long shifts, since natural light

and clear layouts reduce sensory fatigue.

### Designing for people, not just processes

People arriving at hospitals carry anxieties, questions, and hopes. Intuitive circulation eases those first moments of uncertainty. Natural light provides direction, acoustic comfort softens overstimulation, and tonal materials create warmth without overpowering the senses. Tech-

nology integrates into this framework without dominating it. Diagnostic suites, digital systems, and high-performance equipment are planned early, fitting naturally into the spatial order. When this integration is seamless, the hospital feels current while still maintaining a welcoming presence.

### Balancing budgets, efficiency and growth

Responsible design respects budgets and enhances function. Clarity in structure, efficient spans, and simplified service routes reduce costs without affecting care. Each space earns its purpose. Institutions can expand gradually and sustainably when planning decisions are made with intention. Smaller facilities also benefit from these principles.

### Supporting staff and long-term sustainability

Hospitals function through the dedication of medical and support teams. A clear plan shortens unnecessary travel, reduces fatigue, and gives staff environments that feel manageable through intense work cycles. Simpler forms and reduced material redundancy also help buildings age gracefully. Maintenance becomes more predictable, energy use stays balanced, and the spatial framework adapts easily to future needs.

### Designing for cultural realities

Indian hospitals receive families who arrive together, seek reassurance, and form an important support system around the patient. Corridors widen into shared waiting zones, small courtyards invite pauses, and spill-out spaces create breathing room for conversation and rest. These in-between spaces are part of the hospital's emotional infrastructure and carry cultural significance.