



Modern Infusions?

By Ilana Jacqueline

A NEW VIRTUAL reality experience is coming to life for pediatric patients at the Children's Hospital of California. Noise-silencing headphones and oversized screens are displaying Xbox games, action movies and even life-size Skype sessions with friends. It's all part of the new "Infusionarium" created for children who must come to the hospital for long periods of infusion treatments. Great idea, right? While the trend of adventurous infusions hasn't reached as far as my hometown in South Florida, I've found that many hospitals are incorporating modern facilities for patients who come in for their IV treatments.

I recently switched from getting my infusions at my doctor's small office to my local hospital's infusion center. I was nervous about the transition because I'd always had my infusions done in private, and frankly, when I'm in the middle of a treatment, I'm just not that talkative. In fact, I usually like to take that time to either work on my laptop or kick back and sleep.

But, then, I'd never actually been in an infusion center, so I had no idea how they were set up. I've had infusions on hospital gurneys and uncomfortable exam tables, even on the occasional loveseat. But an actual center dedicated to IV treatments? That was a new experience. Would I be in a private room inside of a larger hall? Would I be stuck in an uncomfortable chair for hours? Would they even have Internet access?

My anxieties were alleviated soon after I arrived for my first treatment. A friendly nurse set me up in one of the 10 large recliners in the room, each divided by a curtain.

"OK, here's your heat button and your massage button," she said.

"My what and my what?" I asked.

Turns out this infusion center had heated recliners with a massage (well, more like a weird vibrate) function. It was unexpected and so useful. How many times had I practically had to keep my teeth from chattering from cold IV fluid?

The nurse moved behind my chair and dropped down a small television in front of me.

"We don't have all the channels, but most of your basic cable," she explained.

So, basically, this was like modern treatment heaven. The hospital's Internet was also lightning fast. I was grateful to be able to continue working from my laptop and found that it was much easier to concentrate when I wasn't frozen, distracted by being in an uncomfortable position or struggling to constantly adjust myself to get comfortable.

When I got home later that day, I gushed to my friends: "I just had the best infusion! It was like going to a spa!"

Well, it wasn't exactly their vision of a spa day. But for me it turned an otherwise monotonous and uncomfortable chore into a relaxing and cozy experience. My only regret was that I hadn't looked into an infusion center earlier. For many patients with immune deficiencies, their

Top Five Elements Every Infusion Center Needs

1 Multifunction recliners. Heat those seats! How many times have your teeth chattered from cold IV fluid? No more. Many infusion centers have recliners that do more than just recline — they heat! And some even massage!

2 TV and Internet. And not just one remote to rule them all. Many infusion centers have TVs that swing out in front of you — much like you'll find in your average hospital bed when you're admitted.

3 Privacy. Meeting new people is nice, but sometimes you just want to fly solo. Finding an infusion center with heavy drapes or even walls between recliners can be a huge plus.

4 Ease of access. Whose bright idea was it to attach the IV pole to the actual chair? How are you supposed to get up and go to the bathroom?

5 Great reading material. Say, for instance, *IG Living* magazine? Check the magazine stacks, and make sure to ask for your favorite subscriptions!

treatments (when not done at home) may have to be done in a doctor's office or hospital room. I'd urge patients to check out local infusion centers to see if their insurance will cover a move to a center more fitting to their needs. ■



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