

What's the difference?

BY ALISON LEVINO JONES, ASID, AAHID, IIDA, LEED AP • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF LEVINO JONES MEDICAL INTERIORS, INC.

Healthcare interior designers have always been a special bunch. Face it: anyone inspired by bleach-cleanable, antifungal, flame-retardant, antimicrobial, low-VOC building products has to be a bit different, and they are. In the year 2003, five visionary healthcare architects and interior designers decided that recognition of this “difference” mattered to the industry, to the hospitals and clients who commission interior designers, and to the advancement of this unique specialty.

AAHID, The American Academy of Healthcare Interior Designers, was officially formed in June of 2005. It is modeled after ACHA (the American College of Healthcare Architects), mentored by NCIDQ (National Council for Interior Design Qualification), and supported by generous contributions from industry partners. Dan Lee, AAHID, AIA, ASID, IIDA, the first president of AAHID, describes the creation of this organization as one of necessity: “The convergence of healthcare markets, challenges, and trends makes it more important than ever that every professional involved with a healthcare facility bring a depth of experience and qualifications to his or her area of expertise. This is especially true



Hughston Orthopedic Hospital: The designer's solution to upgrading this 1980s 100,000-square-foot specialty Orthopedic Medical Center was a comprehensive approach that could be implemented over time as a hospital-wide Master Standards Program for custom-designed architectural details, finishes, furnishings, lighting, artwork, and signage. This program allowed the implementation of new products as space and funds became available. New product selection gave thoughtful consideration to the safety of the many mobility-challenged visitors and orthopedic patients using the hospital.

in healthcare interior design, increasingly recognized as a distinct, certifiable field.”

Today, with 91 board-certified interior designers, AAHID is recognized as the advanced certification for healthcare interior design.

Additionally, 28% of these specialists hold ASID accreditation. These credentialed professionals are distinct from other specialties in their experience and expertise in healthcare interior design. The board-certified healthcare designer

is held to the highest possible standard for safety, infection control, patient welfare, codes compliance, and thoroughly researched design solutions.

On a personal note, what draws me to this accomplished group and their alliance with

Continued on page 33



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Spartanburg Regional—Gibbs Cancer Center: LeVino Jones Medical Interiors, Inc., and F.A. Hunter provided full-scope interior design services for this freestanding Cancer Treatment Hospital in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Architectural detailing, finishes, furnishings, lighting, artwork, and signage designs were implemented in this unusual center. The oncology medical office building, education/conference center, treatment facility, and oncology retail center, were integrated into one facility for patient's "one-stop shopping" ease of receiving care.

Continued from page 32

The Center for Health Design and evidence-based design was that they don't assume to know everything about healthcare design. Instead they continually challenge their best work with the

question: Can we measure and prove what we think we know to be true? The process then becomes one in which a design approach is research supported and the information shared.

While "design" is often judged for its obvious aesthetic value, the best work of a medical interior designer is never seen. It appears as a carefully located hand wash sink or grab rail, an effort-

lessly disinfected surface, a HIPAA-compliant interview booth, or a light fixture that appeals to a patient lying under it for hours. Decades of research have proven that properly designed medical interiors have a direct correlation on infection control, patient recovery, hospital process efficiency, family-visitor perception of care, and employee safety and retention. The vehicles by which to implement this valuable information into practical solutions are The Center for Health Design and AAHID. Together, they question what has "been done before", measure data, establish standards, monitor trends, and serve as a link between industry professionals, facilities, and similar allied organizations. AAHID promotes the research of healthcare interior environments and continually seeks collaboration with industry partners to develop improved products.

The process of becoming credentialed as an AAHID certificant is regulated by a Board of Regents, which evaluates a candidate's education, portfolio, work experience, and references. A qualified candidate must be NCIDQ certified and pass a rigorous exam, which tests his knowledge of codes, long-term and acute care facilities, health-care lighting design, healing environments, medical equipment, and accreditation standards, just to name a few topics. The exam is offered twice yearly and is graded on a pass/fail basis. The spring 2009 exam was offered in 35 cities nationwide.

As for me? I am an ASID lifer and recent AAHID

Continued on page 40

INTERIOR DESIGN

Continued from page 36

certified designer. ASID has provided the platform from which the entire interior design profession has evolved. ASID's focus on independent living design and support of universal design has paved the way for the success of design specialties. The AAHID advanced certification allows just one more layer of solid design commitment and expertise, and the opportunity to be better designers for our unique clients. **HD**




Alison LeVino Jones is the President of LeVino Jones Medical Interiors, Inc. For more information visit www.aaheid.org.

Dunwoody Dental Spa: The owner's ultimate goal of "patient comfort" was always at the forefront when designing The Dunwoody Dental Spa. Varied lighting was selected and designed to create a non-clinical ambiance. Custom copper and bronze wall sconces, a water wall, luminous pendant lighting, accent lighting for artwork, as well as color balanced task/ambient lighting for perfect veneer matching are featured. A plasma screen in the reception area provides patients with educational loops about procedures and treatments available as they sip gourmet coffee and enjoy refreshments. Unique patient amenities include noise-reduction headphones with satellite radio, movie goggles, a custom-designed eight-foot water wall for white noise, relaxing hand wax therapy, and more. LeVino Jones was recognized with the Gold Award for Healthcare Design at the 2005 ASID Design Excellence Awards for this successful project.



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