

# around the HOUSE

## Bedroom Addition Provides In-Home Healing

**In-home patient recovery is a** growing phenomenon. As such, in-home nursing healthcare is one of the fastest growing fields of employment. Demand will continue to grow as “boomers” age and growing financial pressure on Medicare and Medicaid encourages or perhaps even one day requires people to recover at home, saving hospital costs.

Family members make up a significant share of caregiver tasks. According to the National Family Caregivers Asso-



Smooth floor finishes and abundant natural light make these Universal Design bedrooms easily accessible and pleasant places.



universaldesignonline.com by clicking on the “articles” button. The interior features discussed in the January and February 2011 issues are especially relevant.

A clear four-foot path to a new three-foot-wide bedroom door is necessary. The four feet will allow caretakers to move alongside patients. The adjacent areas should have the same smooth, nonslip floor qualities as in the new addition, providing for a smooth spatial transition from room to room.

The preferred minimum bedroom size is 13 feet x 14 feet, but this will vary depending on how many people use the space. It is important to consider the bed location when designing the floor plan and make sure at least five feet is available for a wheelchair turnaround or use of a gurney adjacent to the bedside. It is preferable to have five inches of space on each side of the bed, but this is not always possible. Cabinet drawers with full-extension opening hardware and open-loop pulls are easy for people with arthritis to use. Storage

### Making It Work

Make sure the home includes a covered no-step entry and a three-foot-wide door with a level entry. Adequate maneuvering space (at least two feet) should be provided on the door’s lever-handle side. This allows opening clearance for people who use mobility devices. A ramp or other mechanical lift may be necessary.

Refer to November 2010 *PN* (“UD Entries and Building Costs,” *Around the House*). You can also read all the *Around the House* articles since October 2010 at

ciation (NFCA), more than 50 million family members provide some level of care for loved ones.

The goal when designing a new home or addition with Universal Design (UD) is to make it safe and usable for all while ensuring it feels and looks like any other home without these features. Let’s take a look at how including UD in a bedroom addition can make it easier on caregivers and patients, allowing the latter to recover from hospital visits or simply “age in place” without the need to go to a nursing home or other retirement-type housing.

will be useful adjacent to this space for medical equipment, towels, and day-to-day clothing.

It is important to provide a dedicated outlet on the ceiling for installation of a lift. This may be important later if a family member can maneuver into a lift but has trouble walking or getting out of bed alone. The ceiling/roof structure should be designed to carry a minimum 300-pound load along a dedicated ceiling route to the bathroom. This weight load may be adjusted depending on each individual's weight requirements. Consult an architect and a ceiling-lift supplier for specifications.

Install an outlet above the hinge side of the bedroom entry door so an automatic door opener/closer can be installed in the future. These have push-button and hand-held operation controls, increasing independence of movement and making opening doors less of a hassle for everyone. Use a simple cover plate to disguise the outlets until needed.

Consider purchasing a hospital-type bed that raises and lowers to help people get in and out of bed independently. This will assist caregivers. Lifting loved ones is a major cause of caregiver injury, especially for those who have not been trained professionally.

## Stay Connected

It is a good idea to have a light switch on the wall next to the bed connected to an outdoor communication system so it can be activated if someone falls. Technology is playing a growing part in home healthcare.

Always include Category 6 structured wiring in the addition. Home-monitoring technologies such as security cameras, sensors, and lighting or theater controls (a connected television is nice if someone is recovering in bed) need infrastructure wiring and are easiest to install during new construc-

tion. Two-way video conferencing equipment may also be included.

For in-home patient monitoring, systems with unobtrusive sensors can be used and wirelessly linked to a telecare-enabled home unit. This in turn can be connected to a 24/7 dedicated monitoring center. Sensors can detect motion (that can turn on/off lights), flooding, falls, temperature changes, smoke, and carbon monoxide levels.

Tele-wellness technologies such as a blood pressure cuff, weight scale, glucose meter, etc., ensure family members and caregivers are always up-to-date on their loved ones' health and wellness. Make sure structured wiring outlets are two feet above the floor at each side of the bed to allow for flexibility. Video conferencing equipment lets clinicians monitor clients and remotely manage care. Imagine actually "visiting" the doctor without leaving home.

The monitor, tele-health, and verbal communication systems are all interconnected. These are in use now and not as expensive as you might think. In 2009, according to the American Association of Homes and Services for Aging (AAHSA, [aahsa.org](http://aahsa.org)), the cost was \$4,000-\$8,000, depending on which elements are included in a new 1,600-square-foot plan.

These are a few of the items to consider when designing a home bedroom for healing and long-term recovery.

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*Universal Designed Smart Homes for the 21st Century* includes a 25-page room-by-room features and benefits section, including bedrooms. *PN* readers receive a \$5 discount using this coupon code: Vethomes. Available at [universaldesignonline.com](http://universaldesignonline.com).

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