



Dr J.D.M. DOUGLAS
M.B.Ch.B, M.D, F.R.C.G.P, F.R.C.P Edin, DOccMed
Dr A. MASSIE
M.B.Ch.B, D.R.C.O.G, D.F.F.P
Dr D.JANE MUNRO
M.B.Ch.B, M.R.C.G.P, D.F.F.P
Dr C.A. McARTHUR
M.B.Ch.B, M.R.C.G.P, D.R.C.O.G, D.F.F.P.
Dr N. ARNOTT
M.B.Ch.B, M.R.C.G.P, M.R.C.O.G, D.G.M

CAMAGHAEL
FORT WILLIAM
PH33 7AQ
Telephone: 01397 703136
Fax No: 01397 709811
e-mail: admin@tweeddale.com
web: www.tweeddale.com

THE BUILDING AS A HEALTH CARE INTERVENTION n=1 Hootlet

It was an ordinary day in an ordinary practice in the North of Scotland (Ref 1) when we did our patient satisfaction questionnaire again (Ref 2). The numbers have astounded us this year (Table 1). We have always tried hard like most practices but were in gloom last year when the numbers even started going downwards compared to the previous year. Nothing much had changed. We had even been working hard on access targets with the Primary Care Collaborative PDSA templates but the patient satisfaction numbers had gone down despite our efforts.

The staff are the same, the doctors the same and it is still raining outside. So what's the reason for the brilliant scores this year? It can only be the new Fort William Health Centre building. There had been grumbles about moving off the first floor High Street 1970s location and out of the town as the peat bog was removed and PFI was commissioned.

We have an inspired architectural design with views of the North Face of Ben Nevis from consulting rooms which can be seen on posters in urban consulting rooms. We all chipped into an art fund which was matched by public art funds. Our most inspired wheeze was stained glass windows in the waiting room with the college motto in Gaelic 'Eolas Saidheans Le Truas' to gain Gaelic arts funding. There are no health promotion posters or tannoys in the waiting area, only new oil paintings and calming blue light in the ceiling for the depths of winter.

And it is not just the waiting room satisfaction numbers that have improved. It is across the board.

	This Year	2006/07	2005/06
Our overall practice result	72	65	64
National average	64	62	62
Equivalent list size practice average	63	64	64

Discussion with a patient who is an architect, but not for this building, suggests that walking into an open space in a public building with nothing hidden gives a primeval sense of personal safety. Walking upstairs to a restaurant 'up a close' is known to be bad for business let alone disabled access. The openness and light of the waiting area with big windows is perceived as personal safety in a public place. Social interaction while waiting is now possible without piped music and seat layouts. Guaranteed car parking reduces anxiety before the consultation.

The build environment makes a difference and we now have the numbers to prove it. If any other practices out there have similar data, please get in touch and we could come up with an evidence based case for new builds for those practices still toiling in 1960s concrete.

james.douglas@tweeddale.com

- Ref 1: A. Thainerism from Ardlaraich Doric.
Extreme envy expressed by visiting partner (RcM.CV) from a medical tribe trapped in a historic building in North of Scotland.
- Ref 2: Cfep UK Surveys, University of Exeter.