Usability Briefing - a process model for healthcare facilities

**Background:** In complex buildings with many types of users it can be difficult to satisfy the numerous, often contradictory requirements. Research in usability mostly focuses on evaluating products or facilities with users, after they were built. This paper is part of a PhD project "Usability briefing for hospitals", where methods for capturing user needs and experiences at hospital facilities are investigated in order to feed into design processes and satisfy the users' needs and maximise the effectiveness of facilities.

**Purpose:** This paper introduces the concept of usability briefing and the purpose is to develop a process model for applying it on complex building projects. Usability briefing is a process in which users are actively involved, not only in evaluations and data gathering, but also in a continuous briefing process with focus on usability.

**Approach:** The model is inductively developed from a literature review and three case studies at hospitals in Denmark and Norway. With the aim of connecting to practice, the steps in the model are based on RIBA’s planning phases from 2013.

**Results/Originality:** The paper presents an integrated usability briefing process model for continuous briefing, combining the four interrelated activities of 1) briefing, 2) user involvement, 3) evaluations and 4) design. The model provides a visual overview of the four activities in all the building design phases. The approach combines continuous user presence, cocreation, design and evaluation with various users/stakeholders, using creative boundary objects at workshops.

**Practical Implications:** The research results have relevance to researchers, client organisations, facility managers and architects planning new complex facilities.

**Research limitations:** The proposed model is theoretical and needs to be applied and further tested. Because of the empirical results, the explanation of the process model focuses mostly phase 1 and 2 of the RIBA planning model.

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