Identification of space management problems in public hospitals: The case of Maharaj Chiang Mai Hospital

Purpose:
In the past decades, public hospitals in Thailand have developed gradually and been characterized by an incremental development of hospital facilities. First, this study aims to investigate the factors that have caused the incremental development and how such development has affected the hospital's architectural layout. Second, the paper assesses the functional quality of nonclinical areas in the Maharaj Hospital to identify space management problems.

Design/methodology/approach:
The first part of the study is based on a literature review of the Thai health-care landscape. The second part includes the functional quality assessment of nonclinical areas, walk-through observations and documentation. Obtained data were synthesized using building quality method and measurement criteria and analytical drawing techniques for design assessment.

Findings:
The first part identified three factors: the lack of local general practitioners, the limited number of public hospitals and the implementation of Thailand's universal coverage scheme. These factors have resulted in a dramatically high number of patients in public hospitals. The second part identified problems regarding poor accessibility, a low level of spatial flexibility and poor spatial orientation. These problems are related to a lack of appropriate strategic space planning and lack of integration of the Thai culture into hospital design processes.

Practical implications:
An identification of space management problems is a prerequisite to the improvement of hospital facilities.

Originality/value
This paper presents the first study of space management problems concerning nonclinical areas in Asian hospitals.