

Energy Efficiency in Hospitals – towards Sustainable Healthcare



Phd. Dsc. Arch

MICHAŁ TOMANEK, PROF. OF SILESIAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Silesian University of Technology

Department of Architecture

ORCID: 0000-0002-1649-6261

Hospitals are energy-intensive facilities that require significant amounts of electricity, heating, cooling, and water to support their operations. The high energy demand of hospitals is mainly attributed to various factors such as 24/7 operation, specialized medical equipment, temperature and humidity control, and lighting requirements. As healthcare facilities strive to provide optimal patient care, it becomes imperative to address the energy efficiency challenges to ensure the sustainability of healthcare delivery.

The healthcare sector faces the dual challenge of meeting the growing energy demands of hospitals while simultaneously reducing the sector's carbon footprint. Energy inefficiency in hospitals not only contributes to greenhouse gas emissions but also imposes a financial burden on healthcare institutions. Consequently, there is a need to explore and implement energy-efficient practices that can enhance the sustainability of hospitals without compromising patient care and comfort.

There are a number of publications describing the problem itself and its importance, as well as methods of reducing costs in the healthcare sector [1], [2], [3], [4], etc.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this essay is to examine the concept of energy efficiency in hospitals and its importance in achieving sustainable healthcare. The essay aims to:

- identify and analyze the challenges faced by hospitals in achieving energy efficiency;
- assess the benefits of energy efficiency in hospitals, including cost savings, environmental impacts, and improved patient care;
- explore strategies and technologies for improving energy efficiency in hospital infrastructure and operations

to provide best practices to showcase successful energy efficiency initiatives in hospitals.

Methodology

This essay is based on extensive research conducted through literature review, case studies, and analysis of existing energy efficiency initiatives in hospitals. Relevant scientific articles, research papers, industry reports, and governmental publications were consulted to gather information on energy efficiency in hospitals. The essay also incorporates real-world examples and best practices to illustrate the application of energy efficiency strategies and technologies in different hospital settings. Author does not conduct case studies but analysed existing studies.

Energy efficiency plays a vital role in hospitals due to its numerous benefits and implications. Recognizing the importance of energy efficiency in healthcare facilities is crucial for both the well-being of patients and the sustainability of the healthcare sector. Here are some key reasons highlighting the significance of energy efficiency in hospitals:

- **Cost Savings:** Energy represents a significant portion of a hospital's operational expenses. By adopting energy-efficient practices, hospitals can reduce their energy consumption and lower their utility bills. In the United States, where research on energy use is most advanced, data shows the following breakdown of energy use [10]: Space heating 29%, Ventilation 12%, Cooling 11%, Water heating 11%, Lighting 9%, Cooking 7%, Refrigeration 3%, Computers 5%, Office equipment 2%, Other (including medical equipment) 11%.
- **Environmental Impact:** Hospitals have a considerable environmental footprint due to their energy-intensive operations. By prioritizing energy efficiency, hospitals can significantly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, combat climate change, and contribute to a cleaner and healthier environment. In UK, the healthcare industry is responsible for 18 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions (status as of 2015). Of these emissions, 22% come from building energy use [11].
- **Patient Care and Comfort:** Energy-efficient measures can enhance patient care and comfort. By optimizing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, hospitals can provide a comfortable and healthy environment for patients, ensuring proper temperature, humidity levels, and air quality. The indoor environment of a mechanically ventilated hospital building controls infection rates as well as influences patients' healing processes and overall medical outcomes. In a hospital building, the built environment can have a beneficial impact on patients' healing processes [12].

- **Operational Resilience:** Energy efficiency enhances the operational resilience of hospitals. By implementing energy-efficient equipment and systems, hospitals can reduce their reliance on external energy sources during power outages or disruptions [13].
- **Public Image and Reputation:** Energy efficiency practices demonstrate a hospital's commitment to sustainability and responsible environmental stewardship. Patients, staff, and the community increasingly value healthcare facilities that prioritize energy efficiency and sustainability [14].
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Governments and regulatory bodies are implementing energy efficiency standards and codes to promote sustainable practices in the healthcare sector like EU Energy Efficiency Directive (EU/2023/1791) [15], [16].
- **Innovation and Technological Advancement:** Embracing energy efficiency in hospitals drives innovation and technological advancement. Energy-efficient technologies, such as smart building systems, IoT applications, and renewable energy integration, are continually evolving [17].
- **Health and Safety:** Energy efficiency measures contribute to a healthier and safer healthcare environment. Efficient HVAC systems help maintain proper indoor air quality, reducing the risk of airborne contaminants and improving infection control. Advanced lighting systems enhance visibility, reducing the likelihood of accidents and promoting staff and patient safety [14], [17].

Strategies for Improving Energy Efficiency

Here are some key strategies that hospitals can adopt:

- **Conduct Energy Audits:** Conduct comprehensive energy audits to identify areas of energy waste and inefficiency. These audits assess the hospital's energy consumption patterns, equipment efficiency, building envelope, lighting systems, HVAC systems, and other energy-consuming processes. The findings from the audits provide a baseline for developing an energy efficiency plan [18].
- **Building Design and Retrofits:** Optimize the design and retrofit existing buildings to improve energy efficiency. This includes ensuring proper insulation, efficient windows, and energy-efficient roofing materials to reduce heat gain or loss. Retrofitting older buildings with energy-efficient equipment, such as efficient HVAC systems, LED lighting, and advanced controls, can significantly decrease energy consumption [19].

- **Efficient HVAC Systems:** Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems consume a significant portion of energy in hospitals. Upgrading to energy-efficient HVAC systems, such as variable speed drives, high-efficiency motors, and demand-controlled ventilation, can result in substantial energy savings. Additionally, regular maintenance and optimization of HVAC systems ensure they operate at peak efficiency. This can help save up to 30% on energy costs annually [20].
- **Lighting Optimization:** Lighting represents a substantial portion of a hospital's energy use. Implementing energy-efficient lighting solutions, such as LED lighting, occupancy sensors, and daylighting controls, can significantly reduce energy consumption. Automated lighting controls that adjust lighting levels based on occupancy or daylight availability can further enhance energy savings [21].
- **Equipment Upgrades and Efficiency:** Replace outdated and energy-intensive equipment with energy-efficient alternatives. This includes upgrading medical equipment, such as imaging systems, surgical equipment, and diagnostic devices, to energy-efficient models. Additionally, optimizing the performance of equipment, such as boilers, chillers, and pumps, through regular maintenance and tuning ensures they operate at their highest efficiency levels.
- **Energy Management Systems:** Implementing energy management systems (EMS) enables hospitals to monitor and control energy usage in real-time. EMS provides centralized control over building systems, allowing for efficient scheduling, automation, and optimization of energy-consuming processes. It facilitates data collection, analysis, and reporting, enabling hospitals to identify energy-saving opportunities and track progress towards energy efficiency goals [22].
- **Renewable Energy Integration:** Hospitals can integrate renewable energy sources, such as solar panels or geothermal systems, into their energy mix¹ [23]. On-site renewable energy generation reduces reliance on the grid and can provide significant energy savings over the long term. Hospitals can also explore opportunities for purchasing renewable energy from off-site sources through power purchase agreements or renewable energy certificates.

¹ Shift away from fossil fuels to an energy mix dominated by low-carbon sources of energy – renewable technologies and nuclear power.

- **Staff Training and Awareness:** Educate hospital staff about energy-efficient practices and the importance of energy conservation. Training programs can raise awareness, promote energy-saving behaviours, and empower staff to contribute to energy efficiency efforts within their roles. Engaging staff in energy conservation initiatives fosters a culture of sustainability throughout the organization.
- **Performance Monitoring and Measurement:** Establish robust monitoring and measurement systems to track energy consumption, cost savings, and environmental impacts. Regular performance monitoring allows hospitals to identify deviations from expected energy usage, analyse trends, and implement corrective measures when necessary. It also enables the evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented energy efficiency measures.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Foster collaboration among stakeholders, including hospital administrators, facility managers, utility providers, equipment manufacturers, and sustainability organizations. Partnerships can facilitate knowledge exchange, shared resources, and collective efforts towards achieving common energy efficiency goals. Collaborating with energy service companies (ESCOs) can provide expertise in implementing energy efficiency projects [24].

By implementing these strategies, hospitals can significantly improve their energy efficiency, reduce operating costs, enhance sustainability, and create healthier environments for patients and staff. Energy efficiency in hospitals is a continuous journey, requiring ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and commitment to achieving sustainable healthcare practices.

Technological Innovations for Energy Efficiency in hospitals

Technological innovations play a crucial role in improving energy efficiency in hospitals. Advancements in various areas can help hospitals optimize their energy use and reduce their environmental impact. Here are some key technological innovations that can enhance energy efficiency in hospitals:

- **Smart Building Management Systems:** Smart building management systems leverage advanced sensors, data analytics, and automation to optimize energy consumption in hospitals. These systems provide real-time monitoring and control of various building systems, including HVAC, lighting, and security. By collecting and analysing data, smart building systems can identify energy waste, adjust settings for optimal efficiency, and

provide insights for continuous improvement [25].

- **Building Energy Management Systems (BEMS):** Building Energy Management Systems integrate energy data from various sources within the hospital, including HVAC systems, lighting, and equipment, into a centralized platform. BEMS enable real-time monitoring and control of energy usage, allowing facility managers to identify areas of inefficiency and implement targeted energy-saving measures. These systems often include advanced analytics and reporting capabilities for performance tracking and optimization [26].
- **Energy Storage Systems:** Energy storage systems, such as batteries, provide hospitals with the ability to store excess energy generated during off-peak periods or from renewable sources. These systems can then be used during high-demand periods or when the grid is unavailable. By storing energy and discharging it during peak times, hospitals can reduce their reliance on the grid and optimize their energy use. Energy storage systems also enhance resilience and provide backup power during outages [27].
 - **Intelligent Lighting Systems:** Intelligent lighting systems utilize sensors, occupancy detectors, and advanced controls to optimize lighting levels based on occupancy and natural light availability. These systems automatically adjust lighting intensity, turn off lights in unoccupied areas, and make use of natural daylight to reduce energy consumption. Additionally, advanced lighting technologies, such as LED lighting, offer energy savings and longer lifespan compared to traditional lighting sources. Approximately from 60% to 80% of energy can be saved by using of the control systems in lighting (especially for interior lighting) [28], [29].
- **Energy-Efficient Medical Equipment:** Medical equipment constitutes a significant portion of energy consumption in hospitals. Innovations in medical equipment design have led to the development of energy-efficient models. Manufacturers now produce medical devices with advanced energy-saving features, such as power management systems, sleep mode functionality, and intelligent power usage. Upgrading to energy-efficient medical equipment can lead to substantial energy savings while maintaining high-quality patient care [30], [31].
- **Telehealth and Remote Monitoring:** Telehealth technologies and remote monitoring systems allow for virtual consultations and remote patient monitoring, reducing the need for in-person visits. By leveraging these technologies, hospitals can decrease energy consumption

associated with patient travel, waiting rooms, and unnecessary hospital stays. Remote monitoring systems also provide real-time health data, enabling proactive healthcare interventions and potentially reducing energy-intensive emergency room visits [32].

- **Data Analytics and Predictive Maintenance:** Leveraging data analytics and machine learning algorithms can help hospitals identify energy-saving opportunities and optimize maintenance practices. Analysing energy consumption patterns, equipment performance data, and environmental conditions can provide insights into areas for improvement. Predictive maintenance algorithms can identify potential equipment failures before they occur, allowing hospitals to schedule maintenance proactively and prevent energy waste resulting from inefficient equipment. Predictive Maintenance can provide an 8% to 12% reduction in maintenance costs over a typical preventive maintenance program. Savings could exceed 30% to 40% of energy consumption [33].
- **Energy-Efficient Water Systems:** Water consumption and heating can contribute to energy use in hospitals. Implementing energy-efficient water systems, such as low-flow fixtures, water recycling, and heat recovery systems, can help hospitals reduce both water consumption and the energy required for water heating. These systems not only conserve water resources but also decrease the energy demand associated with water-related processes. A study of seven Massachusetts healthcare facilities found the potential for a reduction of almost 20 percent [24], [34].
- **Internet of Things (IoT) Applications:** The Internet of Things (IoT) enables the interconnection and communication between various devices and systems within a hospital. IoT applications can optimize energy usage by monitoring and controlling energy-consuming devices, such as HVAC systems, lighting, and equipment, in real-time. By leveraging IoT-enabled sensors and actuators, hospitals can automate energy-saving actions and ensure optimal performance of critical systems [35], [36].

By adopting these technological innovations, hospitals can significantly improve their energy efficiency, reduce operational costs, and enhance sustainability. The integration of smart systems, advanced analytics, and energy-efficient technologies enables hospitals to make data-driven decisions, optimize energy consumption, and contribute to a greener and more sustainable healthcare sector.

Conclusion

In conclusion, energy efficiency in hospitals is of paramount importance for several reasons. It not only leads to significant cost savings but also contributes to environmental sustainability and enhances patient comfort and safety. Hospitals that prioritize energy efficiency enjoy a positive reputation and engage stakeholders in their sustainability efforts. Compliance with regulatory standards and access to financial incentives further motivate hospitals to implement energy-saving measures.

Implementing energy efficiency strategies in hospitals requires a multi-faceted approach. It involves conducting energy audits, optimizing building design, upgrading HVAC systems and lighting, improving equipment efficiency, and implementing energy management systems. Additionally, integrating renewable energy sources, embracing technological innovations, providing collaboration of stakeholders, including hospitals, utility providers, equipment manufacturers, and sustainability organizations with fostering staff training and awareness are essential steps towards achieving energy efficiency goals.

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PRAWIDŁOWY SPOSÓB CYTOWANIA

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ABSTRACT:

Energy efficiency plays a crucial role in the healthcare sector, particularly in hospitals, where the demand for energy-intensive operations is high. This essay explores the significance of energy efficiency in hospitals and its impact on sustainable healthcare. It examines the challenges faced by hospitals in achieving energy efficiency, the potential benefits, and the strategies and technologies that can be employed to improve energy efficiency. Furthermore, the essay highlights the role of stakeholders, policymakers, and healthcare professionals in promoting energy efficiency practices to ensure a greener and more sustainable future for hospitals.

KEYWORDS:

energy efficiency in hospitals, sustainable healthcare, reducing operating costs in hospitals, healthcare objects designing, hospital designing

STRESZCZENIE:

ENERGOOSZCZĘDNOŚĆ W SZPITALACH – W KIERUNKU ZRÓWNOWAŻONEJ OPIEKI ZDROWOTNEJ. Energooszczędność odgrywa kluczową rolę w sektorze ochrony zdrowia, zwłaszcza w szpitalach, gdzie istnieje bardzo wysokie zapotrzebowanie na energię. Niniejszy artykuł omawia znaczenie energooszczędności w szpitalach oraz jej wpływ na zrównoważoną opiekę zdrowotną. Analizuje wyzwania, przed którymi stoją szpitale, starając się osiągnąć efektywność energetyczną, potencjalne korzyści oraz strategie i technologie, które można zastosować w celu poprawy energooszczędności. Ponadto artykuł podkreśla rolę interesariuszy, decydentów i profesjonalistów opieki zdrowotnej w promowaniu praktyk związanych z energooszczędnością, aby zapewnić szpitalom bardziej ekologiczną i zrównoważoną przyszłość.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

energooszczędność w szpitalach, zrównoważona opieka zdrowotna, ograniczenie kosztów eksploatacji szpitali, projektowanie obiektów opieki zdrowotnej, projektowanie szpitali