

ACOUSTICS2008/2771
Evaluation of Speech Privacy Index and Noise Isolation Class
rating of medical examination rooms and comparison with
predictions

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The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) set speech privacy requirements for medical related information without defining speech privacy for all situations. Areas of special concern for medical organizations are examination rooms because of the need to exchange information between patient and care giver. These rooms are usually constructed in groups with up to three walls common to other examination rooms and a fourth wall next to a corridor. Each adjacency can pose special problems because of construction and position of the equipment in the room. Medical groups are attempting to design and build examination rooms to achieve what they perceive as acceptable levels of privacy while staying within budget and waiting for definitions and requirements. This study provides results of NIC and SPI tests of examination rooms for two medical groups using several different designs. A comparison is given between measured and predicted values based on wall heights and construction details. The wall designs ranged from standard products and construction to employing specialized products, but with only partial height walls. All rooms employed acoustical tile ceilings rather than hard lids. Construction details were found to be the major factor affecting SPI.