



RITA: Reminiscence Interactive Therapy and Activities



At Northumbria Healthcare, we have always endeavoured to incorporate meaningful activities within our elderly care wards. We understand that providing the right environment alongside meaningful activities really makes a difference in enhancing our patient's experience. Regular use of the patient's day room, tea parties, and group sessions have all been part of the day to day goings-on within our elderly care wards but we wanted to try a different format for activities using some of the latest technology available.

We spent a lot of time looking at the different tools available and reaching out to the providers of these tools and came across **My Improvement Network**. Once we had found the right tool for our ward, we sought funding we had received from CAPITA. We approached Bright Northumbria, Northumbria's Healthcare's Charity for the remaining funds needed. We presented our plans and they fully backed our idea by awarding the required funds.

The tool that we purchased for the ward comes in a touch screen PC form but also comes with smaller tablets that are used independently from the main unit. Before purchasing the tool we had already looked at case studies showing evidence the tool worked in an elderly care environment and the benefits to both patients and staff were positive.

We then did some research that suggested the patients and staff were anxious using technology, and even the word put people off from using the tool. With this in mind we spent some time thinking how we could deploy the tool onto the ward in a way that would engage everyone whilst also making things fun.

Rather than this tool simply being a computer, we decided to give the system an identity - We used the campaign "**Hello My Name Is**" and **RITA** was born, using the acronym. **RITA** stands for **Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activity**.

We launched the tool as RITA and were surprised that straight away, RITA became a member of our team!

She is much more than just a tablet or piece of software, RITA helps brighten our patient's day.

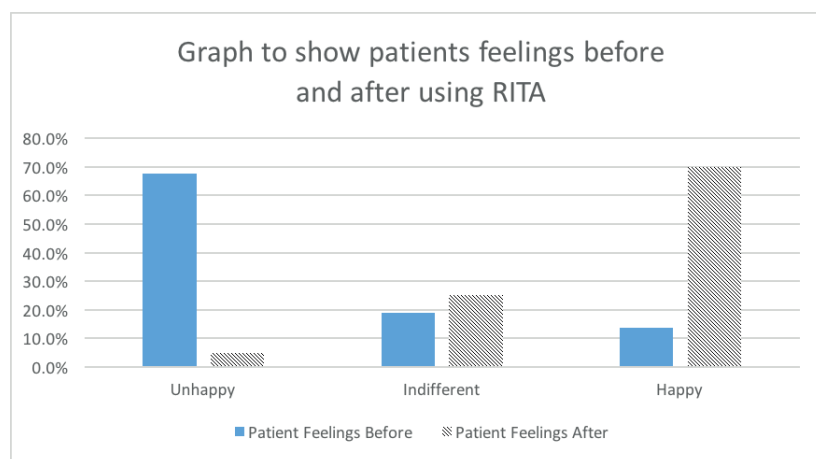
RITA can help:

- Recall memories
- Patients relax in the hospital environment
- Encourage conversation and interaction between patients, their family and staff

Things to do with RITA:

- Watch a movie
- Play interactive games
- Create a life story
- Run reminiscence sessions

We wanted to find out how patients and staff felt about RITA and get some feedback on the impact RITA had made. When we asked patients and staff how they felt about RITA, this is what they said:



Patients

" I love RITA. In all the time I have been in hospital I have never had access to anything like this what a difference she has made whilst I've been in hospital. If I come back then I will be asking for RITA. "

" RITA helped my days pass with enjoyment and has improved my stay massively. "

" When I'm discharged I don't know what I will do without RITA. "

Staff

" The atmosphere after RITA arrived on the ward completely changed; it improved social interaction not only amongst patients but also between staff and patients. "

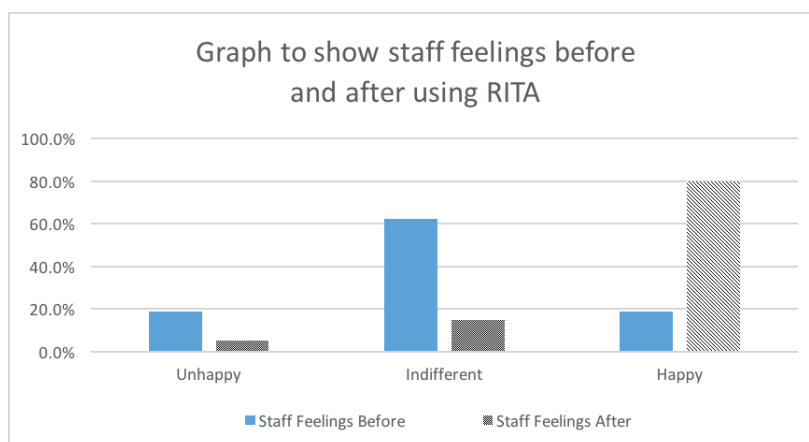
" I've seen 2 gentleman build a genuine friendship as a result of activities surrounding RITA. "

" Having RITA around is a welcome distraction from the clinical environment and any worries or stress the patients may have had. "

" What an impact initiatives like RITA are having on patients health and wellbeing. "

" It's helped us so much in caring for our patients. "

" RITA is just like a member of staff. "



Our initial worries when introducing this tool to our patients and staff was the concern that the technology and software would put people off using it. Introducing the tool as RITA, with the introduction of "Hello my name is" really helped to engage patients and allowed them to look at the software differently. From day one, we found that patients and staff were encouraged, so we measured this over the next 8 weeks.

We found over this time, that both patients and staff that had mostly been feeling worried or indifferent before using RITA. The results after using RITA showed that staff and patients are now feeling happier. We believe this result was helped through the introduction of RITA and giving this an identity. See above the findings we measured during an 8-week period.

Patients actively use RITA everyday with help from visitors and staff. RITA embodies the values of Northumbria and we feel very proud to be able to introduce RITA to our patients, visitors and staff.

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