

Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activities (RITA)

NHS Lothian Charity has funded 10 mobile touch screen units for Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activities (RITA) totalling a cost of £49,945.

What is RITA?

RITA is a new tool in the field of healthcare, it encompasses the use of a user-friendly interactive screen to blend entertainment with therapy to assist and support patients' wellbeing and quality of life. RITA is pre-loaded with content which allows patients to recall and share events from their past by listening to music, watching news reports of significant historical events, listening to war-time speeches and looking at images. A variety of games and movies help alleviate boredom. It can also provide reassuring moving images such as a fireside or a beach or soothing sounds such as birdsong to calm agitated patients. RITA is also be used to work with groups of patients by playing bingo, doing quizzes, singing karaoke, watching movies and group reminiscence.



RITAs have been funded in wards at the following sites;

- Belhaven Hospital, East Lothian
- East Lothian Community Hospital
- Midlothian Community Hospital
- St John's Hospital, Livingston
- Western General Hospital, Edinburgh

Where in the hospitals are RITA being used?

As RITA is attached to a trolley, it is fully mobile and can be used in the Meaningful Activity Centres (MAC), in communal ward areas and by the bedside. Predominantly RITA is used with older adults with cognitive impairments such as dementia. The specially selected list of pre-loaded programmes has been shown to calm patients who may be experiencing symptoms of dementia such as anxiety or restlessness. RITA has a number of interactive games which stimulate hand and finger exercises which can support patients with physical disabilities/frailties or those undergoing rehabilitation.



When patients come to hospital, we can give them the medical treatment, but we want to give more. We want to give comfort, a sense of homeliness. This is what the MAC and the RITA machines are trying to do."

Activity Coordinator, Roselane ward,
Midlothian Community Hospital

The information in this report is collated from several visits to wards to observe RITA and conversations with staff and patients. The findings illustrate how RITA supports NHS Lothian Charity to meet a number of its strategic outcomes.

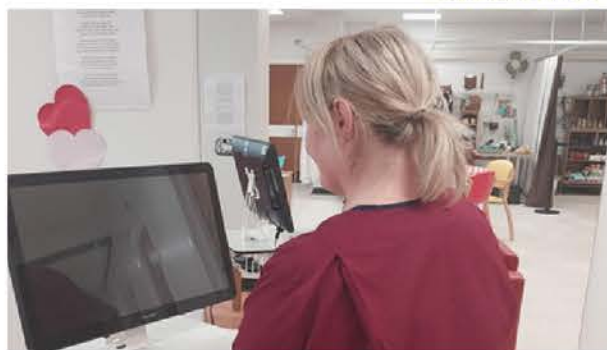
Improved clinical outcomes for patients

The interactive gaming elements in RITA have been used to support the physical and mental rehabilitation of some patients.



We had a young male patient with a brain injury on our unit, he was very fit and had been a gym instructor. He used RITA to play games which rehabilitated the dexterity and motor skills in his hands and fingers. We saw that this speeded up this rehabilitation and as a result his anxiety levels came down as he felt a bit more in control of his recovery. This helped reduce his length of stay in hospital."

Lead Dementia Nurse in Stress and
Distress, St John's Hospital



Patients experience less stress and distress

RITA has shown to reduce agitation in patients and help staff manage behaviours that challenge, taking pressure off staff.



One lady came on the ward and was very restless to the extent she was crawling around the ward. This was very distressing for the patient, the staff and other patients on the ward. I wondered what would calm her, she mentioned yoga so I found some yoga music in RITA and took it to her room. She would listen to the yoga music and be so calm and settled, it was like she went to another place. When I chatted with her family, I found out she had been a yoga teacher. This made life so much easier for staff and made things on the ward so much calmer for the other patients."

Activity Coordinator, Ward 73, Western
General Hospital, Edinburgh

The Oaktree ward in East Lothian Community Hospital saw the number of incidents and adverse events drop from an average of 14 a month to 7 with the introduction of using RITA on the ward.

Patients experienced increased connections and reduced isolation

RITAs are being used to facilitate group activities in wards in Midlothian Community Hospital and Western General Hospital, Edinburgh. Patients who spend time in individual or smaller shared rooms have been able to connect with other patients across the ward, alleviating feelings of isolation that some long stay patients can experience.



As most of my patients have dementia I use the reminiscence images with them in a small group, this then leads on to the group reminiscing and sharing stories. It really got everyone together chatting and alleviated the feeling of loneliness and isolation they can face."

Activity Coordinator, Ward 51, Western
General Hospital, Edinburgh

COVID still presents issues in hospitals, RITA can support patients to feel less isolated when wards are limiting visitors. As one staff member at the Western General Hospital explained: "I wasn't able to bring patients to the MAC as per my normal activity schedule and visitors were not allowed in so I took RITA to a safe berth with 4 patients and we played bingo for the afternoon. This alleviated feelings of isolation for those patients and brought a bit of fun and normality to a stressful situation for staff and patients."

Patients experienced improved mental and physical wellbeing

Staff reported how RITA impacted the wellbeing of patients and contributed to their quality of life while on the ward.



Staff on Oaktree ward in East Lothian Community Hospital witnessed an increase in nutrition intake during the times they put on film and bingo nights for the patients on the wards.



We use RITA across 2 wards and when we do a group activity we sometimes mix patients from both wards who vary in their levels of illness and mobility. After each activity we see a marked improvement in mood of the sicker patients."

Activity Coordinator, Pennylane Ward,
Midlothian Community Hospital



Our patients love music and musicals so when we put a musical on using RITA you see the patients dancing, tapping their feet. Getting them up and moving is so much better than lying in a bed."

Activity Coordinator, Roselane Ward,
Midlothian Community Hospital

Case Study

Watching 'It's a Wonderful Life' with patients – an observation

Inspired by a positive pop-up cinema experience provided by NHS Lothian Charity's Tonic Arts programme, staff at the Pennylane and Roselane wards in Midlothian Community Hospital recreated this experience for patients using RITA, a bluetooth speaker, screen and projector. I was invited along for one of these viewings.

On the day I visited, the Activity Coordinators had gathered 8 patients along with 2 support staff to the cinema room. The staff made the patients comfortable on the sofas and seats, the screen was lowered, the curtains were closed and they agreed on a film from the catalogue in RITA. They decided on 'It's a Wonderful Life'. I noticed some of the patients seemed slightly agitated and were moving around the room but as soon as the lights went down and the movie started, all the patients settled down into their chairs. I could see the smiles appear on their faces as the movie titles began, the room was silent as they watched. The atmosphere in the room felt calm and soothing.

The Activity Coordinator told me: "Sometimes they even fall asleep when they are in there, which is good for those patients that are unsettled and like to pace the corridors".

The Activity Coordinators also explained that using RITA can have a big impact for staff on wards, especially when they bring a number of patients into the cinema room: "Taking so many patients off the ward at one time allows the staff time to finish any outstanding work and free up staff who are required to care for someone on a 1:1 basis. You can see the ward staff are less stressed during this time."

The team intend to apply for funding for an additional RITA as the current one is shared across 2 wards. This will allow the Activity Coordinators to use RITA for more group activities, for individual use and within the new sensory room which is in development on the ward.

Rebecca Caulfield, Evaluation
Manager, NHS Lothian Charity



Thanks to staff at Midlothian Community Hospital, St John's Hospital, Livingston and Western General Hospital Edinburgh for taking part in this evaluation.