

BELONG - A Home for Patient Belongings in Clinical Spaces

Ms Maria Kane, Quality Manager, St James's Hospital; Máire Kane, Conall Casey, Dr Gerard Boyle and Dr Christopher Soraghan, Design Innovation Lab, Medical Physics and Bioengineering, St James's Hospital, Mr Joseph Bowden, Patient Representative

Yearly 20 to 30 (formal) complaints - hearing aids /dentures/glasses getting lost while at hospital...

can't eat

can't hear

can't see

costly to replace

longer in hospital

poorer outcomes



Design a bedside container to keep belongings safe





Spark*seed



**Take
home message*

- Listening to patient feedback
- We can identify areas for improvement
- And take action to find solutions
- But this can only be done in partnership with service users along all stages of the process

Belong Box – the solution to missing items that patients are looking for

A bedside storage device developed by St James's Hospital staff aims to solve the problem of patients losing valuable items that often impact their recovery, writes **Michael McHale**

For many patients enduring hospital stays, it's the little things that can often make the biggest impact. Going without small comforts can have a detrimental impact on a patient's mood and wellbeing.

For Joe Bowden – who describes himself as a 'frequent flyer' to St James's Hospital – one of his small comforts were his earbuds. 'I would like to listen to the news of the day and so forth, but to do that in the hustle and bustle of a public ward is quite hard,' he said.

But, as someone who has had several hospital stays in recent years, having nowhere to keep his three earbuds secure became a problem. On at least three occasions, Joe remembers losing one of the buds during a stressful period.

'It took away quite a bit – your independence doubt it definitely had an effect on me. When it went on a couple of days, it tends to bear down on your recovery and your wellbeing and everything else.'

The 64-year-old Dubliner added: 'There's no losing personal items is a problem that Maria Kane, quality manager in the Patient Experience Office at St James's, has heard about all too often.

She receives more than 20 complaints every year, mainly from elderly patients or their families, about valuable necessary items, such as dentures, hearing aids or glasses going missing.

'Regardless of age, if somebody has a denture or anything like that, they have a tendency to wrap them in tissue paper if they take them out,' she said.

'And then, with the cleaning process in the hospital, they are lifted up so many times because they're considered as just a piece of tissue, and they're thrown in the bin.

'With the hearing aids, if they buzz or beep, and people take them out for a break and put them on their beds – they're so tiny now, that if they're in the sheets they get put into the linen skips and they're gone,' she added.

'It's an ongoing problem, but also colleagues in other hospitals have told me they have the exact same problem, and you know, they're looking for a solution for it as well.'

Now, that solution appears to be in sight. The Belong Box has been designed and developed by the Design and Innovation Lab at St James's in collaboration with Maria's team and students from Trinity College and the National College of Art and Design.

The box works by creating bespoke spaces for storing specific items in a safe and hygienic way. It includes storage for glasses, hearing aids and other valuables and a pot specifically for dentures which can be filled with water.

The box is small enough to be safely kept beside a patient's bed and has braille on the top to assist visually impaired users.

The developers also worked with the hospital's infectious diseases team to ensure there were no hinges or clasps on the box making it easier to clean and disinfect and avoid any contamination.

The design team even added a mirror, so patients can shave from the comfort of their hospital beds.

After prototypes were 3D-printed at the Design and Innovation Lab, they were trialled in a number of clinical areas including the intensive care unit and among older patients in surgical and medical wards.

Following positive feedback the team behind it now hope to roll the boxes out across the hospital, and perhaps to other sites in the future.

For patients like Joe, who is also a member of St James's Patient Representative Council, the box makes a hospital stay that bit easier.

For others, it can make a huge difference to their recovery. 'For people who are cognitively impaired, I've witnessed them routing around, looking for whatever it may be,' he said. 'If you have one box beside them, it's a reminder that everything is there.'

Maria added: 'It sounds like a simple little box and you might think, 'what's the big deal about losing those items?'

'But the distress – for example, when somebody can't chew and eat, their nourishment, their healing, their recovery is affected.

'If they haven't got their glasses they can trip or fall. And then hearing aids are so important for communication, consent, for following instructions and advice and knowing their diagnosis.'

She hopes the Belong Box can prevent many of these issues in the future, and contribute to improved patient outcomes. 'It's something simple we can do to make a big impact on their care from something really small.'



Thank You

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A home for patient belongings