
Intensive Care Patients Stay in Touch with Adapted iPads



Intensive Care patients at The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust (UK) are using specially adapted iPads to keep in touch with their families.

Trolleys have been fitted with iPads on levers which tilt over patients, allowing them to make 'Facetime' video calls to loved ones from their beds.

The mini computers have also been loaded with software offering an easy to use system of spelling out words and sentences – enabling communication for patients on ventilators and unable to speak.

Consultant neuro anaesthetist Dr Will Loh had the idea to use the iPads after seeing a patient make an unsuccessful attempt to use the technology.

"We had a patient with spinal injuries who was paralysed from the neck down and his wife brought in his iPad. It was put in front of him but it kept falling onto his face so it was no use, but it gave me the idea to try and adapt it," said Dr Loh.

IT project manager Andy Evison and his team developed the iPad trolley, sourced the conversation software and also negotiated with one of the Trust's service providers to ring-fence an allocation of network bandwidth for using FaceTime – video communication software from Apple, which allows callers to see and hear each other via an internet connection.

The first patient to use the system was Norman Hurst from Gayton, Wirral, a myasthenia gravis sufferer who has been in ITU on a ventilator for three weeks.

Spelling out his comments on an iPad, he said: "Using this iPad to talk to everybody has been fantastic because they get the message and I get the answers that I want."

Dr Loh added: "This is especially useful for long stay patients, especially those who have come from a long distance, as it means their families can keep in touch with them and can also have meetings with us, via Facetime."

The project was funded by the NHS Northwest Innovation Fund.

Project team members Dr Liz Kingston and ICU Sister Sue Williams demonstrated their new system at the Healthcare Innovation Expo 2013 at ExCel London.

Source: [The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust](#)

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