

Sensory Therapy

Why is it needed?

Noise Confusion “Don’t Move”

When you go into the scanner, it is very close to your face.

*Leaflet:
Having a CT Scan
at Southend Hospital*

The heavy sedation required for this process carries a very small risk of your child stopping breathing.

*Leaflet:
Pediatric MRI Sedation
Information for Patients*

Your child may have mood changes which can make him or her irritable. This is temporary.

*Leaflet:
How to care for your child
after an MRI scan
with sedation*

Patients attending Southend University Hospital for imaging examinations often experience anxiety. This is even more acute for paediatric patients or those with additional needs. The environment within the main X-ray department is not ideal for children. Children are ordered about, told “don’t move”, even tied down. Trusted adults are often made to hide behind a screen. Children are already in pain or feeling anxious about being ill and their fears are enhanced by the strange environment.

It is important to get good, clear diagnostic images, but fidgety and crying children hamper this. In diagnostic imaging, high quality is of paramount importance in order to identify pathology that may require urgent treatment. Occasionally imaging examinations have to be abandoned and the patient has to come back another day or time, which causes inconvenience to both patient and their families and carers. If treatment is delayed, then this risks further complications due to undiagnosed injuries or medical conditions that cannot then be managed in a timely manner.

Don’t move



CT and MRI scanners are particularly problematic for children, they are noisy and claustrophobic and frightening, a highly distressed child may need to be sedated. Sedation takes more time, more nursing resources, and there is always the, albeit slim, chance of an adverse reaction to the medication.

Distressed children need more staff to care for them during treatment to distract them and calm them. They can also have an adverse effect on other children who can also become upset. Sedated children also need more care.

**It’s not
going to hurt**

Imaging examinations can take a lot longer than they would normally, due to the patient being uncooperative and the time spent coercing and reassuring; this has an impact on other patients who are then kept waiting much longer for their own examinations.

The Sensory Trolley

Sensory Therapy

“It’s a God send”

“We use the trolley constantly”

“It is an amazing resource”

A sensory trolley is a fun, immersive, multi-sensory experience. It can transform any room into a place where children can engage with images, sounds and tactile sensations thus reducing stress.

The Rhino Sensory Trolley is a self-contained unit with multiple items within it, such as a bubble column and projector and long tactile fibre optic threads. It is also mobile and narrow enough to fit through doors and can be moved between departments.



This item provides a uniquely mobile solution, only requiring one power socket to operate the multiple items within it. The unit is also lockable, with a locked cupboard at the rear to store detachable parts. If the projector and bubble column were purchased separately secure storage would have to be found for each of them individually, whereas the trolley is self-contained. As it is all-in-one the individual pieces of equipment are also not at risk of damage due to being perched on work-surfaces within the imaging room.

Southend University Hospital already has a trolley in their paediatric ward but it is in constant use and unavailable for other departments. They would like to purchase a second one to enable them to provide an improved environment and therefore improved experience for patients outside the ward. Though primarily for paediatric patients it is widely accepted to be beneficial to all patients with special needs. Patients with any form of neurological deficit would benefit from this equipment, as it would provide a distraction and help them to relax.

“The sensory trolley would provide us with a mobile sensory solution, meaning that we can use it in any of the X-ray rooms, and even take it up to our fluoroscopy room if we have a patient who has additional needs.”

A Calm Environment

The Long Term Impact

The Child

No hospital visit is ever going to be fun. However, by using the sensory trolley the stress experienced by a child visiting the X-ray and radiology departments at Southend University Hospital will be considerably reduced.

When children are anxious their loved ones are too. Visitors will benefit from their time in the hospital being far less stressful than it would otherwise be. This equipment will provide a more relaxed and calmer atmosphere for our patients, and therefore their relatives/carers.

Relaxed and happy children spend less time with the big, frightening machines, reducing stress even further. Diagnostic images are also clearer aiding timely diagnosis and improving health outcomes.

The Hospital

Nursing staff on Neptune Ward, the paediatric centre at Southend Hospital, sometimes have to be diverted from care duties to calm and distract children. Radiology staff will be able to carry out their duties and feel that they are providing a better quality of care to patients who are more of a challenge when trying to achieve good quality imaging.

"The equipment being mobile can be used as patients move across radiology services and will be utilised daily"

Quicker visits to X-ray and radiology departments mean that these expensive pieces of equipment can be used more efficiently. More patients will experience the benefits of fast and accurate diagnosis. With fewer procedures to sedate children Neptune Ward could also use fewer day beds releasing resources for other use and reducing waiting times for other children.

The Cost

The total cost of the Rhino Sensory Trolley is just £3,060.

This is a fraction of the cost of X-ray and other imaging equipment. This means that for comparatively little expenditure these expensive pieces of equipment can more effectively be utilised and more patients will have the benefit of fast and accurate diagnosis.

The Rotary Clubs of South Essex, led by the Hadleigh Castle Rotary, have raised £2,350 towards the cost of the sensory trolley. In the era of Covid our ability to fundraise face-to-face is severely curtailed so we are appealing to you to help us raise the balance. There is just £710 to go.