

CoDa at the RHN is supported through fundraising and the Leisure and Family Service

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Dancing at The RHN with The CoDa Dance Company



As part of our commitment to a holistic approach to care, the RHN offers a range of additional therapies and services to patients and residents. This includes dance for patients on Chatsworth and Wellesley wards, delivered in partnership with CoDa, a local dance charity which specialises in dance for people with neuro-disabilities.

Supported by CoDa's team of professional dancers, and student dance volunteers from Roehampton University, patients gather in their ward day rooms to take part in guided movement and visual exercises for enjoyment and relaxation. First introduced in 2019, the weekly sessions have developed a devoted following of patients who value the opportunity to come together and express themselves through dance and movement.

Everyone is made to feel they can make a valuable contribution, irrespective of their level of mobility. Some patients will simply smile and make eye contact, whilst others will also make gentle movements with their limbs. Each session begins and ends with the session leader dancer asking patients to indicate how they are feeling through movement. Not surprisingly, the response from patients indicates increased energy and happiness levels after participation.

When the pandemic first struck in March 2020, the hospital had to make the difficult decision to suspend the dance sessions along with other group leisure activities and therapies to protect patients and residents from the risk of virus transmission. However, over the summer we reintroduced the popular weekly

sessions, adapted to virtual delivery via a live Zoom link to a small group of socially distanced patients. With restrictions on external visitors to the hospital, onsite support for patients is provided by the RHN Occupational Therapy team instead of volunteers.

As well as enabling RHN patients to continue to enjoy a much-loved activity, the virtual sessions are helping the RHN and CoDa to continue to gather evidence and feedback on the benefits of dance to people with brain injuries or illness. Whilst the most obvious difference is to emotional wellbeing, there is also growing evidence that the dance sessions are helping patients to discover cognitive and physical capabilities that they didn't know they had. We are working with University College London to design an evaluation framework to help assess the impact of the virtual sessions on patients' quality of life in a measurable way.

Jenny Porteous, RHN Occupational Therapist says: ***"We have all loved having CoDa on Wellesley Ward. We have seen some wonderful participation from patients with a variety of abilities. Barriers that are often so apparent in the patients' day to day life seemed to be lowered when engaging in dance. There is always plenty of smiling and laughter from both staff and patients when CoDa are on the ward."***

We are reliant on voluntary donations to continue offering dance to patients. We would like to thank The Boshier-Hinton Foundation for their generous support for the virtual dance sessions.

