



CARDIOWALL CASE STUDY: NEWBRIDGES MENTAL HEALTH UNIT

Increasing engagement in physical activity
by 50%

ABOUT NEWBRIDGES UNIT

Newbridges Inpatient Unit is an 18-bed acute mental health unit managed by Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust. Providing residence for adult males with previous history of severe and enduring mental health problems.

Newbridges Unit offers a range of therapeutic interventions, treatments, and activities. Their aim is to help patients return to normal living by utilizing a social inclusion model.

We spoke with Rhianna Redshaw, Associate Practitioner, who told us about the positive impact the CardioWall has had on patients' recovery, staff wellbeing, and the effectiveness of their social inclusion model.

OVERVIEW

The CardioWall was delivered to Newbridges Unit in October 2022 and wheeled straight into the activity room. Since day one, **patients and staff have been using the CardioWall every day, and staff have reported that everyone is benefitting in some way.** This case study highlights the overwhelmingly positive impact that the CardioWall is having, not only on the patients' recovery, but also on staff wellbeing.

KEY BENEFITS

PATIENTS

- **50% more patients engaged in physical activity**
- Improved mental wellbeing, happiness, and confidence
- Improved social and communication skills
- Increased adherence to exercise programs

STAFF

- **Expected to Aid Least Restrictive Practices**
- More time available due to on-ward exercise
- Improved rapport with patients
- Effective patient management tool

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CARDIOWALL

The CardioWall is mostly used as a 'fun' activity on the ward, rather than for structured exercise sessions. Since Newbridges Unit does not have an Activity Coordinator, physical activity sessions are less structured and less regular than at some other mental health units with dedicated activity staff. **The CardioWall has been an extremely effective way of engaging patients in physical activity, without them perceiving it as 'exercise'.**

Patients play on the CardioWall daily without requiring prompts from staff. Previously, staff found that they needed to actively encourage patients to participate in physical activity, but not so with the CardioWall. Patients have an ongoing competition where they attempt to beat the top score and their previous efforts. **Staff regularly get involved and compete with the patients, which has been beneficial for building better staff-patient rapport.**





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The CardioWall massively improves patients' mental wellbeing – it doesn't matter who uses it, everyone will benefit in one way or another, whether it's improvement in confidence, independence, or social skills. Our patients are happier since we've had the CardioWall!

RHIANNE REDSHAW,
Associate Practitioner

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heard coming from the activity room, which **draws in other patients and promotes a socially engaging, welcoming and active environment which has increased patients' confidence with social interactions.** These skills are fundamental and transferable to everyday life (Foundation, n.d.) and will help patients successfully return and contribute to the community.

EXERCISE ADHERENCE

Staff personalise each patient's rehabilitation program, so for patients who enjoy exercising the CardioWall is integrated into their exercise programs to develop greater cardiovascular fitness and muscular strength. Staff help set goals for patients, such as higher CardioWall scores and increased frequency of use and duration, **which provide patients with focus and motivation.** Improvements and progression on the CardioWall are tangible and highly visible due to the scores and leaderboard. **This has improved patients' adherence, motivation, and engagement in exercise, far more than typical exercise equipment.**

PATIENT IMPACT

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT

The most profound benefit the CardioWall has had is increasing patients' physical activity levels – **50% more patients are now regularly engaged in physical activity, compared to previous levels.** Because the CardioWall is gamified and fun, patients do not perceive it as a piece of exercise equipment even though it's physically challenging and cognitively stimulating. It's 'exercise in disguise', which is engaging more patients in physical activity than ever before. With physical activity known to reduce anxiety, depression, and negative mood, whilst alleviating feelings of low self-esteem and social withdrawal for mental health patients (Callaghan, 2004; Guskowska 2005), it's no surprise staff are reporting healthier and happier patients.

SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Patients have developed social and communication skills, such as confidence, making conversation, asking questions, teamwork and sharing by playing on the CardioWall with their peers. Staff have found a lot of fun and laughter can always be





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MENTAL WELLBEING & HAPPINESS

As a result of higher activity levels, more social interaction, and improved confidence, patients' stress is reduced and **there is a noticeable improvement in the patients' mental wellbeing and their happiness** on the ward. **Staff have attributed these improvements to the CardioWall**, and it has quickly become an effective tool to help Newbridges Unit deliver their social inclusion model.

PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Ms Redshaw gave an example of one patient who has particularly benefitted from the CardioWall. A 35-year-old first arrived at Newbridges Unit **as an extremely anxious and distressed man who struggled to manage his emotions. He'd never participated in exercise and wasn't interested in starting at Newbridges.**

However, during times when he was anxious and distressed, staff encouraged him to play on the CardioWall. As he didn't perceive the CardioWall as a piece of exercise equipment, he didn't object to their recommendation. **This patient now regularly uses the CardioWall and has made huge improvements in his ability to manage his emotions.** He's enjoying physical activity and has started to explore other exercises too. **Staff attribute these improvements in behaviour and motivation to his engagement on the CardioWall.**



STAFF IMPACT

MORE AVAILABLE TIME

All members of staff are extremely happy with the CardioWall as it has benefitted them in several ways. **The biggest impact is that staff 'save' time during each shift.** Since the CardioWall is on the ward, patients spontaneously choose to play on it, thus reducing the time required to plan, organise and supervise off-ward exercise. This is a huge advantage for staff, as it **reduces workload and administrative tasks, whilst increasing their available resources; all of which are linked to staff stress and burnout** (Edwards et al., 2000). The CardioWall has therefore positively impacted staff's stress levels, morale, and job satisfaction.

IMPROVED STAFF-PATIENT RAPPORT

The CardioWall is a very social piece of equipment, which encourages staff and patients to use it together, engaging on a more informal level. **Spending time on the CardioWall has enabled staff to get to know the patients better, which has significantly improved staff-patient rapport**, and is expected to improve both patient outcomes and staff retention.



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EFFECTIVE PATIENT MANAGEMENT TOOL

Finally, the CardioWall has proved to be an effective management tool when patients become frustrated, anxious, and disruptive. Staff encourage patients to use the CardioWall to redirect their energy as it's physically challenging, cognitively stimulating, and extremely robust. **Staff anticipate this may reduce the number of incidences of patients needing to be restrained, which maintains their independence, respect and dignity, and empowerment and involvement,** as per the Least Restrictive Practice guidelines (Mental Health Act 1983).

SUMMARY

The CardioWall has had a profound impact on both the patients and staff at Newbridges Acute Mental Health Unit. **Patients are more engaged in physical activity and continue to develop their social skills,** which has positively impacted their overall mental wellbeing and happiness. Staff have more time available during their shift which is **saving valuable NHS time, money, and resources. They're using fewer restrictive practices and building better rapport with patients,** which improves their own wellbeing and should lead to higher staff retention.

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