

## Case studies: How have culture and creativity been supporting people in health, care and other institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic?

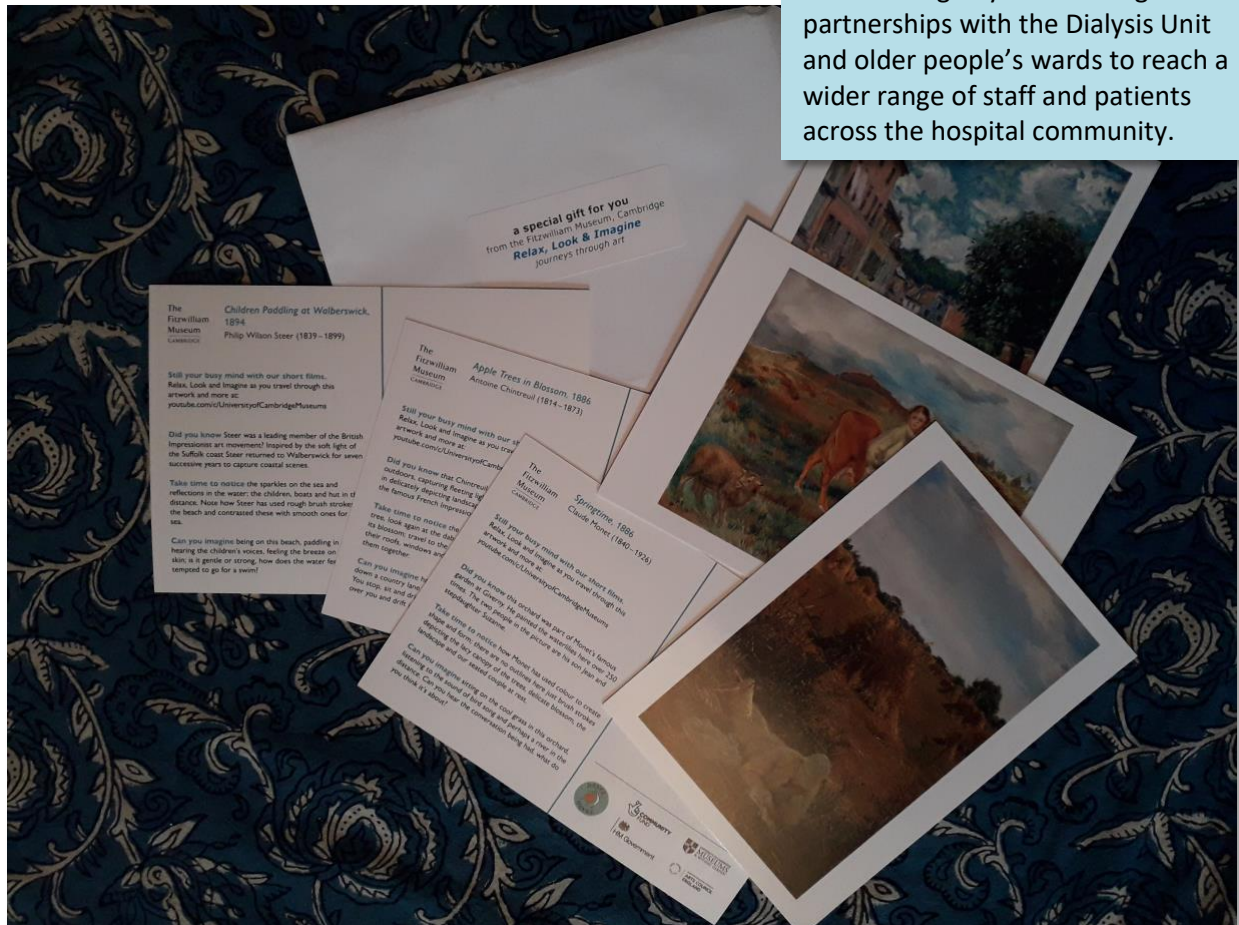
Project: Relax, Look, Imagine

Organisation: University of Cambridge Museums

Region: East of England

Designed for: Adult acute healthcare

We are reaching more people within the hospital community, both through the films and the postcards. These lighter-touch forms of engagement mean that we are reaching beyond our targeted partnerships with the Dialysis Unit and older people's wards to reach a wider range of staff and patients across the hospital community.



Relax, Look, Imagine; Journeys through art – postcards distributed to patients and staff

### Introduction

At the start of Lockdown, the University of Cambridge Museums and the Head of Arts at Cambridge University hospitals NHS Foundation Trust worked together to consider how arts and health activities, usually delivered in person, could continue to support the Addenbrookes hospital community through other means.

The conversation originated in response to the ongoing dialogue between the Dialysis Unit and the Museum who have been partnering with the [Curiosities at the bedside](#) programme for four years. Working with staff at the unit to understand the impact on COVID in their setting, we understood that PPE, face masks and social distancing had the impact of separating the carefully built community at the (Dialysis) Unit, and introduced what staff described as a palpable atmosphere of fear. With patients needing to attend three times a week, their experience of this 'fear' has been constant.

This Unit's psychotherapist was keen to build on the qualities of absorption, connection, curiosity, exchange, and learning that take place through the established 'Curiosities' programme as part of her work to address the increased mental health challenges faced by patients.

The initial result was the sharing of 'Relax, Look, Imagine', an immersive film series created at the start of lockdown in response to the needs of various of the Museums' community partnerships, including the hospital community, and drawing on our previous in-person practice. Each film features one artwork from the Fitzwilliam Museum collection and aims to help people calm busy minds, with invitations to travel through paintings, stepping into them with their imaginations.

Although our starting point was maintaining contact with the Dialysis centre, the films are now being employed across the Hospital to contribute to patient and staff wellbeing, particularly on wards dedicated to older people's care. Postcards with discussion prompts and film links have been printed and distributed to support a lighter touch, bedside engagement.

Plans are developing for the Museums to also contribute to a series of podcasts created for the unit.

## Funders

Arts Council England – The University of Cambridge Museums Consortium is supported by ACE as a Band 3 National Portfolio Organisation. Additional print costs were met by Cambridge University Hospital Arts programme, which is supported from a range of sources include Addenbrookes Charitable Trust.

## Partners

Cambridge University Hospital Arts programme

## Who is it for?

- Patients in receipt of dialysis at Addenbrookes Hospital, their families and care givers.
- Older people on the wards dedicated to their care.
- Staff and volunteers to signed up to the Cambridge University Hospital Arts facebook site

## Are these people you have worked with before, or new participants?

Both

## How many people took/are taking part?

Dialysis Unit: 150 patients and 20 staff

Other wards: unknown

Staff facebook group members: 2,000

There have been 2,600 views of the films at the time of writing, across all audiences (not exclusively Addenbrookes community).

## Where is it happening?

Cambridgeshire

## For how long has it been happening?

The Fitzwilliam Museum has worked in partnership with Addenbrookes hospital for over a decade. The University of Cambridge Museums and Addenbrookes Dialysis Unit partnership began in 2016 with the Curiosities at the Bedside programme, monthly visits to the Unit by the seven museums, and more recently, from Autumn 2019, the Fitzwilliam Museum also started working on one of the older people's wards at the Hospital as part of the Dance and Time with the Museum programme.

The response to Covid began in May 2020, with the creation of the Relax, Look, Imagine film series and related postcard correspondence.

### What were/are the main outputs?

Relax, Look, Imagine -guided relaxation & art exploration films: Summer 2020 x7 films, with a further set of films in production.

Artwork in focus, postcards & posters: for bedside discussion about the featured artworks, and for use by staff to promote their own wellbeing numbers

Contribution to the Dialysis Unit's planned podcast series: Autumn 2020, the ambition of this series will be to take the 'at the bedside' practice from the established partnership programme (Conversations and Curiosities where Museums share artefacts as a way of prompting conversations, connections, exchange and learning) to the medium of podcasts, inviting comment and feedback.

Sharing practice with the wider Culture, Health and Wellbeing sector through case studies, presentations and online networking events.

### What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

Support mental wellbeing, helping to combat high levels of anxiety, fear and stress resulting from the Covid virus conditions.

Foster connectivity, relationships and belonging, combatting loneliness and isolation.

Inspire curiosity, engagement and creativity, combatting diminishing sense of identity

### Have you adapted existing work to make this happen? If so, how?

We have adapted our in-person bedside model to make use of digital technology, offering films that can be viewed on an individual's personal device to reduce infection risk, as well as creating postcards to make people aware of the offer and provide something tangible for patients and staff to keep. The invitation in the films has been drawn from another part of our inclusion practice, the Dance and Time in the Museum programme in which older people in residential care, sheltered housing settings, the regional hospice and day centres take part in sessions that explore artworks through relaxation, slow looking, shared learning and self-expression.

### Does your work support people who identify with one or more of the protected characteristics<sup>1</sup>?

Many of the patients have chronic conditions and as such are registered with a disability.

By working with patients on particular wards, we are targeting support towards people who are older.

### Evaluation & Feedback

Where possible we are seeking feedback from participants using the films and resources along with key members of staff.

We haven't been able to formally evaluate this phase of our partnership work during lockdown, but will do so as part of our annual cycle of evaluation, particularly with the Dialysis Unit.

### What is your own impression of how it has worked? What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Challenges

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<sup>1</sup>Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Equalities Act 2010).

- Working within an NHS environment during the pandemic emergency, necessitating rapid change and adaptation
- Pressures on key staff (partnerships)
- Additional time needed for planning and production when working remotely
- Practicalities of finding ways to avoid cross-contamination from any ward-based resources
- No access to wards and hence patients, which has reduced our opportunities to access direct feedback or to consult
- Challenges relating to working with NHS digital technology
- Museum staff capacity to homework.

#### Successes

- Ownership of the Relax Look Imagine resource by the Unit, indicating relevance of the resources and the value placed on the partnership
- Depth with which the Unit are engaging with the Relax Look Imagine resource.
- Commitment of key personnel
- At the point of writing this case, the Relax Look Imagine films have been watched 2600+ times, although it is unknown how many of these are Addenbrookes patients, undoubtedly, they have been shared predominantly at the Unit and in the older people's wards.

#### Are you reaching more people/fewer people/different people?

We are reaching more people within the hospital community, both through the films and the postcards. These lighter-touch forms of engagement mean that we are reaching beyond our targeted partnerships with the Dialysis Unit and older people's wards to reach a wider range of staff and patients across the hospital community.

#### What new skills have you or your colleagues had to develop to deliver this work?

Variety of digital skills

#### What would you say has made this project possible?

- Established partnership with the Hospitals Dialysis Unit and Cambridge University Hospital Arts team
- Project artist embedded in the Dance and Time with the Museum programme who has an established practice at the Hospital providing her with knowledge and insight.
- Funding being already in place from Arts Council England, and funders taking a flexible approach, accepting changes to delivery models and budget lines to enable us to achieve the desired outcomes in a different way.
- Commitment from the Museum Senior Leadership. Commitment from museum Senior Management, including ensuring all learning and engagement staff remained unfurloughed.
- Skilled and motivated project teams at Hospital and Museum.

#### What would have made it easier?

Stronger digital capacity; a longer lead in time.

#### Further information

[Relax Look Imagine](#) – film series, YouTube

Online press coverage:

<https://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/news/essence-lockdown-captured-hospital-exhibition>

The University of Cambridge Museums is a consortium of the eight University Museums and the Botanic Garden.

Our collections span four and a half billion years of natural objects, artefacts and art. They are centres of discovery for everyone, and essential research collections for students and academics.

We activate the power of the University through our collections, sharing with our communities and networks to deepen understanding of our world, inspire new thinking, and address local and global challenges.

This project has focussed on the collections of the Fitzwilliam museum, the University's principal museum of art and antiquities.