Welcome to the December Newsletter regarding the research project ‘Case Studies and Design Concepts for People with Dementia, their Families and Carers in Irish Hospitals.

In this newsletter you will find information regarding the project, as well as key terms, and a map of the Tallaght Hospital, the key site of this research.

For more information on this research see www.trinityhaus.tcd.ie or contact Tom Grey at tom.grey@tcd.ie or Dimitra Xidous at xidousd@tcd.ie

Tallaght Hospital and TrinityHaus, Trinity College Dublin have been awarded funding by The Meath Foundation to carry out research to examine case studies and dementia friendly design concepts for Irish hospitals to support people with dementia, their families. This research will run from September 2015 to August 2016 and the results will be used to inform future hospital planning and design.

Irish Hospitals

The Irish National Dementia Strategy states that up to 29% of all patients entering a general hospital may have dementia and that the costs associated with dementia care in acute hospitals is approximately 21 million Euro per year.

Making Hospitals more Dementia Friendly

Many hospitals are not designed to care for people with dementia, and this not only undermines their care but also adds to the burden of care for the staff.

Negative factors in the typical hospital can include: communication difficulties due to the busy hospital setting; multiple and competing stimuli; and, inability to deal with wandering. In addition, the important supporting role played by family members and caregivers is often hard to maintain within the hospital setting.

The research will examine how the physical hospital environment can provide a better experience for people with dementia; furthermore, it will focus on how hospitals can be designed to enable family members and carers to provide the continued and consistent support of a familiar and trusted figure for the person with dementia throughout their hospital journey.

The findings will be informed by the following: an examination of national and international exemplars as case studies; investigation of key design concepts; and, onsite evaluation at Tallaght Hospital. People with dementia and their families and carers will be consulted to ensure that their needs and preferences underpin the research.

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The typical hospital environment can prove very challenging for many people due to the fact that hospitals present an unfamiliar, highly active setting, with multiple stimuli and high numbers of staff and visitor movement.

For people with dementia, who may already experience disorientation and sensitivity to environmental stimuli, these conditions may be quite stressful.

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Key terms

Dementia is a syndrome characterized by progressive cognitive impairment and is associated with impairment in functional abilities and, in many cases, behavioural and psychological symptoms. There may be memory loss, communication difficulties, changes in personality or mood and problems with spatial awareness.

Dementia Friendly Design is the design of products, services and the built environment to take into account the physical, sensory and cognitive needs of people with dementia, while also supporting other users such as family members, carers.

Dementia Friendly Hospital refers to the overall hospital environment, from access and circulation, through to finishes, fittings, and furniture, as well as artwork and technology to support a dementia friendly design approach.

Family member and carer is an individual who is familiar to the person with dementia and is involved in their life.

Check out www.trinityhaus.tcd.ie for more information on this project. We will also be circulating further newsletters as the project progresses to keep all stakeholders informed.
What are your experiences when you visit the hospital? Have a think about the 5 questions outlined on this page:

1. How does the hospital work for you in terms of the hospital location, or accessing the hospital from nearby bus or Luas stops?

2. How easy is it to get onto the hospital grounds? How easy is it to get around, either on foot, or in a car?

3. Is the hospital building itself easy to enter and exit? Once inside is it easy to find your way around or get to where you want to go?

4. How accessible, usable or comfortable are the main spaces or rooms that you would typically use?

5. How well do things like signage, lighting or furniture work, in terms of creating a usable, comfortable and pleasant environment?

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