

CLINICAL BENEFITS OF CINEMATHERAPY TO PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN THE UK



HSJ PARTNERSHIP
AWARDS 2019

MEDICINEMA 
feel better with film

HSJ met with Head of Paediatric Psychology, Melinda Edwards, Guy's and St Thomas' to discuss the benefits cinematherapy brings to patients and their families in hospitals throughout the UK.

Whilst in hospital, patients are temporarily taken away from family and friends, and from their familiar home environment, and they often have little or no interaction with others on the ward. However, Medicinema allows patients to socialise naturally, by simply taking a stroll to the cinema or discussing the plot, characters and their thoughts on the film, all makes a difference to the patients' day and gives them a sense of a different reality. Melinda admits that generating positive conversations between patients is hard, but the cinema *'suspends the reality of the situations they are in and allows them to experience some escapism for a short while'*.

In 1999, Melinda was present when Medicinema, the charity working to bring permanent, state-of-the-art cinemas to patients in UK hospitals, installed their first cinema in St Thomas'. Excitement was fueled by children on the ward curious about this new addition to the hospital, and instantly, Melinda wanted to find out more, and more importantly, learn how she could refer her patients. She was delighted to hear that the cinema was open to everyone as referrals were not needed, everyone was invited!

Melinda described the reason for being in hospital does not matter, as even the more physically challenged patients are helped by nurses and taken to the cinema, so patients know it is a safe, supported and comfortable environment. As a psychologist, Melinda details how she wants the very best for her patients and their families when in hospital, and outlines that *'experiences are to be as positive as possible, as well as recognising why experiences in hospital are so challenging to children and their families'*.

After witnessing the difference that the screenings made to patients during their stay in hospital, Melinda now runs a *'teenagers' group'*, made up of 30 young people who have chronic or life limiting conditions. This means they are in and out of hospital as part of their treatments and tend to be very limited in their social activities, but Melinda recounts how the cinema simply *'enables young people to be young people and allows them to have the same opportunities and experiences as other young people'*.

Even before patients arrive in the Medicinema, the anticipation of being able to do something like this, in a hospital environment, comes as a real surprise and gives them something to look forward. You cannot underestimate how mundane a lengthy stay in hospital can be.

One of the main challenges Medicinema overcomes is bringing together patients by building an *'inclusive community'*. This is ultimately where cinema again proves incredibly valuable as the cinemas support patient's medical conditions to enable a safe and comfortable environment, and allows them to forget about their conditions, if only for a couple of hours.

The HSJ Partnership Awards aims to help Medicinema to continue to run and build cinemas across the UK by choosing them as the awards chosen charity partner.
[Find out more on the partnership here.](#)

The HSJ Partnership Awards

