



RITA FEEDBACK - WARD A1

Dementia Companion Michelle Given

So, this morning I used RITA for the first time with a patient.

The patient is living with Dementia. I noticed that she had a very low mood today and was particularly confused and kept focusing on what day it was and getting agitated and annoyed. I've only had RITA for a short space of time, but already I've felt the amazing impact it has had on several of our wonderful patients.

My first session was with a gentleman whose mood was very low. Since admission, he had been either just sitting in his chair or lying in bed, not communicating very much and very withdrawn. I brought RITA to his bay and asked if he would like to have a wee go with me.

I knew that this gentleman had a farming background so I decided to try the pig racing. To say that watching those pigs running brought a smile to his face was an understatement, you could see him brighten as he laughed out loud, as did I and the other staff who were all cheering their own choices on. It really brought him out of himself.

My next session saw me companion a lady who the nursing staff informed me had been very unsettled through the night. I asked her if she liked music and she said, 'oh yes, all music'. I decided to try the karaoke for the first time. I never thought I'd see the day I'd be belting out Beatles songs at 9.15 in the morning. But we did and she sang her absolute heart out. She was singing away and clapping along with a great big smile on her face. She told me afterwards that hearing the music had made her very happy. This led into a great conversation about her music collection and her whole family's love of music and we spent some time reminiscing about her favourite songs and she was content for the rest of the morning.

In my third session I decided to try the relaxation. The patient I was with was quite anxious and distracted due to the noise and busyness of the ward. I got her comfortable in bed and played the birdsongs with a screen showing clouds moving across the sky. I couldn't believe how relaxed she became, focussing on the relaxing images on the screen instead of the staff whizzing about and what was going on around her.

Close to my finish time I saw an HCA trying to communicate with a younger patient who had been admitted with a stroke. He was having difficulties talking and being understood, as the stroke had caused aphasia. I used the 'Hear Me' app on RITA and we were able to realise his needs and meet them. As he pressed the buttons on the screen and heard RITA reading out what he wanted to say to us, he had the hugest smile on his face and gave us a big 'thumbs up'.

I've been a Dementia Companion for 6 months now, I really love it but still feel new to the role and I'm still learning every day. Having RITA as a resource has really helped me to be more confident in my job and I feel more equipped to deliver my role. The realisation for me is that not only can I deliver much more diverse therapeutic engagement and meaningful activities to our patients living with dementia using Rita, but I've also realised RITA's value in terms of patients who struggle to express their needs verbally. This is going to be an invaluable asset to our patients, myself and the whole team in our ward.

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