www.kissingitbetter.co.uk

What we do:

*Kissing it Better* is about sharing the simple ideas - ideas that patients, carers, hospital workers have sent to our website. It is also about harnessing the energy of the most dynamic groups in a local community and inviting them to use their special skills to make a difference to the care of patients and their carers within hospitals and Care Homes in their locality. Whenever these groups visit, the energy generated by their enthusiasm helps to enable staff to embed those wonderfully simple ideas from our website.

Whether the organisation is a Further Education college where fully supervised student beauticians can be organised to come to their local hospital to gain vital work experience on elderly care wards or outpatients, a brownie pack who come on to a ward to gain their 'dignity' badge by talking to patients, a madrigal choir from a local school or a pet therapy charity keen to bring some of their dogs onto the ward to visit patients who miss their pets, *Kissing it Better* ensures that both the givers and the receivers gain the maximum possible benefit from that experience.

‘Hi Jill, Thank you so much for all of the hard work and faith you have had in us as an organisation, and also in our students. They’re a loveable little bunch and I know that we are enhancing their time here at college ten-fold with the opportunity you have presented them with. I hope that we can continue to work together, growing your initiative from strength to strength. Kind regards, Laura Jones, Curriculum Manager in Beauty Therapy, Walsall College

The little things that make the world of difference to health care. We worry about improving practical concerns such as good communication, appetizing food, comfort and surroundings – things that show both patients and their carers that the traditional values of healthcare providers are unshakably intact. *Kissing it Better* offers an easy-to-use, on-line ‘suggestion box’ of what has been shown by experience to work. The web site can be used free of charge by patients, carers and health professionals. Good ideas for transforming the lives of patients are quickly and easily shared.

Health organisations are striving to improve patient experience. It is a major focus of both health policy and management, even though measuring experience (as distinct from clinical results) is notoriously difficult.

Tackling the small things has a fundamental effect, both on patients' complaints of poor attitudes and on staff’s morale and motivation. *Kissing it Better* has learnt from the most respected customer service businesses, such as Apple, Disney and John Lewis. We advocate a clear philosophy for focusing on the practical concerns of patients and carers – an outlook promoted by Florence Nightingale over 100 years ago yet still essential today.

*Kissing it Better* does not tackle clinical or medical issues as these are under constant scrutiny by clinical, nursing and management staff, as well as being subject to Government initiatives and targets. No, ours is the context of care in which these vital skills are delivered. *Kissing it Better* addresses key questions such as:
• How can we constantly exceed a patient’s expectations of their care environment?
• How can we spread transforming and innovative ideas across the whole healthcare system?
• How can we harness in this task the contributions of volunteers and the local community?
• How can we do all this in a way that uses health resources better without extra funding?
• And can we do these things today, please, rather than tomorrow?

*Kissing it Better* draws on the goodwill towards the NHS and other healthcare providers, using the examples of best practice already happening - and we applaud the many unsung heroes associated with them. Through our web site, events and training, we promote these practical ideas and foster the mind-set that created them. With resources under pressure and rising complaints in the media, there couldn't be a better time for doing this. *Kissing it Better* aims to make a world of difference to health care, today.

http://www.kissingitbetter.co.uk/mission/

The straw that breaks the camel's back

Waiting areas in hospitals, whether in A & E or general outpatients, can be a daunting experience, especially when they are crowded with people. Stressed staff trying to deal with a variety of patients and relatives, all of whom have a reason to be very anxious, need to demonstrate kindness and compassion to avoid a tense situation becoming explosive. The queues may be long, the chairs may be uncomfortable, the vending machine is broken and the walls have posters on them reminding patients of the zero tolerance policy towards anyone who exhibits any kind of threatening behaviour. These are all physical factors designed to make a difficult situation far worse.

Of course, being rude or threatening anyone is not good. But being impatient, anxious, agitated and angry are emotions that are commonly displayed by anyone who is worried that either they, or a loved one, may be seriously ill. Whilst it may not be good behaviour, it would be wrong to call it inappropriate behaviour given the stressful situation. Yet, that is how many senior nurses describe a patient or relative who behaves in a way deemed to be outside what they feel is a normal code of conduct.

Responding to someone who is anxious about their illness by being equally intolerant of their behaviour rarely helps the situation. On the other hand, empathizing with their situation, apologizing for the wait, offering then a drink (if they are allowed one), or offering to phone someone to make them aware of any delays, are all gestures that can instantly diffuse a situation.

Nurses are trained to understand and deal with someone who might be stressed. Showing compassion, combined with a suggestion of how the situation may be eased, is a skill that can make a huge difference to a tense atmosphere in a crowded waiting room. Rising to the bait, on the other hand, generally makes the situation far worse.
Not surprisingly, some of the best examples of customer care come from the most successful companies including Disney, John Lewis and Marks and Spencer. Disney have learned to minimize the distress of a long queue by offering entertainment to customers while they wait. Sometimes they offer refreshments too. They are also very good at keeping people informed about the likely length of their wait.

Kissing it Better often works in outpatient departments by providing pleasant distractions for patients. Wonderful student beauty therapists may offer free hand massages and manicures; small choirs may sing a selection of popular songs. It all helps to pass the time and makes patients feel more relaxed. And, in general, relaxed patients are happier patients.

We know that these activities significantly reduce complaints. Complaints are not pleasant issues to deal with so, staff are also more relaxed when our wonderful volunteers are offering these services. Sometimes, if it is quiet, they can benefit from a quick, relaxing hand massage too.

Understanding the needs of a patient, and reacting accordingly, is what good nursing is all about.

It's a simple idea but, sadly, in the heat of the moment, it can sometimes be forgotten...often with disastrous consequences

http://www.kissingitbetter.co.uk/the-straw-that-breaks-the-camels-back/

Health Warning - Smiling is infectious

I don’t know about you, but when I’m ill or in pain I’m not always easy to be around. Not being able to do the things I want to do can leave me frustrated.

Illness, pain and anxiety about our own health or the health of those we love can take the fun out of life. We think about our pain. We worry about what’s wrong with us, whether we’ll get better and what effect our medical conditions will have on our lives. And the worry of course makes things worse. The world shrinks but the pain gets bigger – or at least it seems to.

So anything that can distract our thoughts, change our mindset and bring some colour back into our lives makes an enormous difference. It might be a smile from a stranger on the bus, a kindly touch from a friend or a favourite meal cooked by a loved one. It might be watching the birds on the feeder in the morning - or it might be the Year Three children from St Joseph’s RC primary school in Manchester.

OK, I wasn’t a patient on the day they came to sing at the outpatients department at Manchester Royal Infirmary last week but I was able to see the effect the children had on the visitors and on the staff around me.

Seeing the children walk through the doors and take their places to sing was like watching a smile slowly spreading across the whole room. You could feel the energy lift all around.
Actually there were 30 smiles – and that was just the children! As they started their school song under the guidance of head teacher Mrs. Porter and class teacher Mrs. Nathaniel the smiles caught like a Mexican wave - from patients to relatives, nurses to receptionists, WRVS ladies to porters passing through. One nurse even took a song sheet and joined in.

The singing was good. The songs were imaginative and the performances excellent. But it was the children themselves and their smiles that were the real gift. These were children that knew how to have fun and knew how to share that with others.

But, according to Mrs. Porter, it’s not just the patients and staff who benefit.

“The children love to see the reaction they get and how it cheers people up, “she said.

“They like to see there’s a bit of an audience. It’s a different sort of audience with people coming and going all the time. And they get to see what it’s like and how busy the nurses are.

“Some of the people who are there waiting are obviously quite anxious. But then you see them start to smile. These children know they are doing a really important job. No one else is going to do it so it’s up to us to do what we can.”

Hospitals are big institutions where staff carry huge responsibilities. Sometimes the inevitable pressures and procedures mean that they can lack the human touch which is so important in the healing process. Groups like St Joseph’s (and St Chrysostom’s Church of England primary school who visited the Manchester Children’s Hospital the previous week) are a reminder that despite everything life throws at us there can still be joyful moments and something to smile about.

The St Joseph’s school song – sung with characteristic enthusiasm - probably puts it best

“We are the children from St Joseph’s School
We take a pride in the things that we do
Learning together and having fun
Who's for a good day? EVERYONE”

http://www.kissingitbetter.co.uk/st-josephs-manchester-blog/

Skills by 'Singing for the Brain'

Music, especially familiar songs, can give enormous pleasure to people with various forms of dementia.

**Singing for the brain** is a group activity started and managed by the Alzheimer's society in more than 30 locations across the country. Watch the video on the link below.
Mr. Smith’s Outpatient’s appointment..... We wish!

Mr Smith is a fictional patient. The following account records his experience at a fictional hospital. Although there are some wonderful outpatient departments around the country, not everyone receives the care bestowed upon Mr Smith. Our hope is that someday, sooner rather than later, all hospitals will adopt some, if not all, of the simple practices shown below. Who knows, maybe your treatment has been even better than this. We truly hope so!

One day Mr Smith had to go to the hospital for an outpatient appointment. The letter from the consultant included a map of how to get to the hospital, a plan of the hospital indicating which department he needed to get to and which car park he should use.

He was also advised about car park fees. Other transport options were also explained including the opportunity to book a volunteer driver if he didn’t feel up to driving himself. He was advised to look at the outpatient advice on the ‘hospitalhelp.co.uk’ website and, following their advice, on the day of the appointment he arranged to have the whole afternoon free to avoid being stressed by unforeseen delays, he made sure he had plenty of change for the ticket machine in the car park, a pad and pencil in case he thought of any last minute questions and a good book to read in the waiting room.

When he arrived, it was raining and the car park was very full. As he wasn’t feeling his best, he was delighted to meet a volunteer at the car park entrance to help him find a space. The volunteer also pointed out the ticket machine and offered to loan him an umbrella. He then pointed out the right entrance for his appointment.

When Mr Smith reached the entrance another volunteer offered to help him find where he needed to go. He was able to take him part of the way until Mr Smith was confident he could manage the rest. Along the corridor, clear colour-coded signs on the wall and floor made the route easy to understand. Here and there along the wall cheerful posters welcomed Mr Smith to the hospital and offered helpful advice that might be useful to him during his stay.

When Mr Smith arrived at the department, the waiting room was crowded. The receptionist/nurse welcomed him immediately and explained how long he may have to wait. She settled him in his seat and offered him a selection of appropriate magazines to look at.

The consultant was very busy but the receptionist/nurse made sure that Mr Smith had some idea of how long he might have to wait. She apologised for the delay and offered him an area where he could use his ‘mobile’ to phone anyone who might be affected if he was delayed. Having checked with the consultant, she offered Mr
Smith the chance to buy a drink and some biscuits from one the machines which were regularly filled and were in full working order.

Throughout his time in the waiting room, Mr Smith was kept informed about the time he’d have to wait. The receptionist and nurses apologised for the delays and explained that the consultant always wanted to give patients enough time to express their concerns. At the end of the appointment, the receptionist asked Mr Smith if he’d understood everything he’d been told by the doctor. She assured him that if he was unclear about anything, it could be sorted before he left the building. She then took him outside the unit and explained carefully and clearly the best way for him to get back to his car, checking with him that he had the right change for the car park machine before he got outside.

Mr Smith thanked the receptionist, the volunteer on the door and the man in the car park and told them that their cheerful willingness to help him along every step of the way had made the world of difference to what he feared might be a frightening afternoon.