

KIDSPACE INTERACTIVE – PLAY REALLY HELPS!!!

The Hospitals:

Children's Medical Center Dayton
University of North Carolina Hospitals

The Problem:

How can healthcare facilities provide kids with the opportunity to use the electronic games and computers that they enjoy at home?

The Solution:

Cabinets, carts and multiple game kiosks that hold the popular video game systems

The Vendor:

Kidzspace Interactives

Being a patient in a hospital can be tough enough but if you are a child or a teenager, it can be even tougher. A visit to a healthcare facility puts all that is normal on hold. That can be extremely difficult for children, especially for children visiting a hospital for the first time. They will very likely experience some apprehension and fear. They have lost some control over their lives. Even an extended outpatient stay can be stressful.

According to Karen Muller, Child Life Director at Children's Medical Center in Dayton, OH, coping skills may vary from child to child but it helps a great deal to try to "normalize the hospital environment" and provide kids with activities they are accustomed to doing.

Ms. Muller points out that, "today's kids are very familiar with computer and video games, it's just like TV was thirty years ago." During a normal day, using computers and video games is a very popular activity for kids. They use electronics to do school work or to just have fun.

Whenever possible, children in healthcare facilities should be given an opportunity to enjoy some of the facets of their lives they generally would experience outside the healthcare environment. In a healthcare setting, keeping patients and their families upbeat and positive is as important to the healing process as meeting the clinical needs of the patients. Replacing fear with fun is especially important for young patients.

When six year old Killian Carpenter of Franklin, NC was admitted to The University of North Carolina Hospitals in Chapel Hill, for abdominal surgery, he knew that things were not normal. His father, Darrin could tell that Killian was worried about what was going to happen to him and was intimidated by all the unwanted attention.

Darrin recalls the youngster commenting on the large number of "very serious grown ups wearing green shirts or blue shirts". They were all over the place!

However, when Killian's post surgery recovery period began he met up with Kidzspace. A Kidzspace Carousel is located in the playroom and features multiple electronic game stations. Darrin could immediately see that playing the games took Killian's mind off his problems and pain. According to Darrin, "playing the games gave Killian some normality and a little bit of home" during his eight day hospital stay.

Beth Bailey, a Child Life Specialist at the hospital said Killian's reaction was very typical. Mrs. Bailey says "the children get so excited by the video game systems that the games become their primary focus." The kids really appreciate the chance to play.

Parents notice too, and are often quite relieved to see their kids enjoying themselves. Darrin Carpenter recalls "when I saw Killian smiling and having fun, I knew that things were going to get back to normal, it was all going to be okay."

Mrs. Bailey echoes this parent's experience and says that on a daily basis she is thanked by parents for providing their kids the chance to play with the Kidzpace system. Many parents comment: "this is the first time I've seen my child smile since we got here."

Kidzpace has a wide range of cabinets, carts, and multi-station units that can accommodate almost any size space and meet the needs of almost any department. Each station can house any of the most popular video game systems, a PC computer, or a series of electronic activities for younger kids running on a touch-screen activated system.

Their products allow facilities the opportunity to offer patients the use of electronic activities that are built in to durable, lockable cabinets, protecting the components from damage, misuse or theft.

Some of the systems from Kidzpace are mobile and can be used from a bed or chair to meet the needs of non-ambulatory and semi-ambulatory patients. There are some stationary models for use in lobbies, waiting areas, or play rooms. Each station can house any of the most popular video game systems, a computer or a series of electronic activities for younger kids.

Various studies have shown that providing play opportunities for kids can reduce the length of hospital stays. Both Ms. Muller and Mrs. Bailey use the games as a motivator to get children up and out of their beds. Ms. Muller sometimes makes a bargain with the patients that they can ride a wheelchair back to their rooms if they will walk over to play the games.

Beyond the electronic game systems Kidzpace offers a wide variety of non-electronic play things.

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