Patient wellbeing at centre of New Zealand’s first in-hospital design lab

Child-friendly medical equipment and navigation guides are among the patient-friendly innovations being created at a first-in-kind hospital design centre to improve the experience of staff, patients, families and visitors.

AUT University and Auckland District Health Board (DHB) have joined forces to establish the Design for Health and Wellbeing (DHW) Lab at Auckland City Hospital. The new lab brings together AUT students, graduates and staff; design industry collaborators, patients and DHB staff to work on shared projects for the benefit of those using Auckland DHB services.

Dr Stephen Reay, Senior Lecturer of Industrial Design and Innovation at AUT University and Justin Kennedy-Good, Programme Director Performance Improvement at Auckland DHB are the driving force behind the lab, which is providing a unique learning environment and already delivering design-led solutions to the DHB.

AUT postgraduate student Neerali Parbhu is currently trialling her new child-friendly IV pole called Sprout at Starship Children’s Hospital and AUT graduate designers Nick Hayes and Reid Douglas have created a new navigation guide in the Emergency Department. The guide gives patients a greater understanding of what to expect at each step of the process when visiting the department.

Dr Reay says the DHW Lab is a valuable real world experience for AUT students.

“The opportunity to work in New Zealand’s largest public hospital provides an authentic experience for our students which isn’t easily achieved in an academic setting. The students who have been part of the DHW Lab to date have really embraced this opportunity. I am incredibly proud of their work as it will improve the experiences of all healthcare users.”

Justin Kennedy-Good says that the DHW Lab will have lasting effects on the way Auckland DHB operates.

“We want to make sure the experience of our patients is not lost in the delivery of healthcare and the DHW Lab will help to improve our understanding and support of the whole person and their family’s needs.”
The team at the lab is currently working on diverse patient-centred projects that place the experience of the patient and their loved ones at the forefront and enhance the DHB’s clinical expertise.

“The lab complements Auckland DHB’s existing teaching and innovation ethos but brings an entirely new capability into the organisation. This will be vital as we work closer with patients, families, staff and all those who interact with the hospital to improve the health of our community,” says Kennedy-Good.

For more information on the DHW Lab, visit www.dhlab.com.

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