

Nursing Times

'Game-changing' bag for transferring critically ill patients

23 December, 2016

By [Steve Ford](#) News Editor



Emergency and intensive care nurses in North West London are now using a new standard kit bag to transfer patients that is expected to save them significant amounts of time.

The NHS North West London Critical Care Network has rolled out a new bag to aid the transfer of patients between wards, when going for scans or from one hospital to another.

"All the equipment is set out in the way you would use them"

Catherine Forsythe

The Patient Transfer Bag was designed with full input from frontline clinicians in critical care and emergency departments, and 70 are now in use in every hospital across North West London.

Now that the bag has been rolled out as standard clinical practice, it is expected to save up to eight hours a week in units – the equivalent of one whole clinician's shift.

The design is intended to allow for easy access to each piece of medical equipment, using a unique storage layout with clear plastic pockets for each item, and easy and quick access to essential items.

Other features include a special side-pouch called the "patient pocket" to allow for additional items unique to each patient to be packed and brightly-coloured internal pouches with bold-print labels so things can be found quickly in an emergency.

It also has a "super-strength" reversible strap to make the bag easy to attach to a bed or trolley while in use.

Nurses and other staff involved in patient transfers told the Critical Care Network that while historically each provider or hospital has had a system for equipping transfers of its own in place, it was not previously standardised across regions or networks.

"There were 16 different bag designs, over 13 different hospitals"

Melissa Dransfield

This lack of standardisation had led to a lack of familiarity when staff moved between provider sites, slowing down critical transfers, causing confusion, and even leading to direct risks to patient safety.

Clinical staff members were asked what equipment they needed to provide safe management when carrying out patient transfers, and how often each item was typically used.

The bag was then made with this feedback in mind. As part of the roll out, all staff members have also been provided with training in how to check and use the Patient Transfer Bag.

Feedback so far has been positive and in 2017 there is a strong expectation that there will be uptake of the bag beyond London.

Catherine Forsythe, practice educator and nurse at the Royal Marsden Hospital's Critical Care Unit, said: "Before the Patient Transfer Bag, it took me 20 minutes to make sure that all the right equipment was packed whenever we did our regular checks.

"With this new design, it takes me well under 10 minutes," she said. "The clear plastic design allows us to check the contents without having to unpack and repack the whole bag. In an emergency situation, that will have a direct impact for clinicians – and, most importantly, for patient safety.

"When you're working in critical care, you need everyone to work quickly and calmly," she noted. "One of the simple yet brilliant things you notice when you're using this bag is how visual it is; all the equipment is set out in the way you would use them.

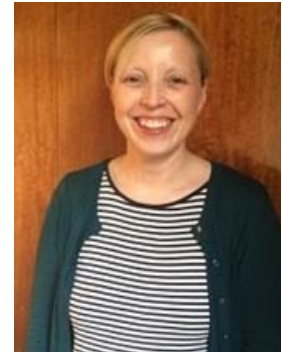
"The design concept is so logical. You can tell clinicians have had genuine input right from the start," she added.

The bag was recently presented to an audience of clinicians, allied health professionals and managers by Dr Melissa Dransfield from the North West London Critical Care Network.

She said: "Before the rollout of the Patient Transfer Bag, there were 16 different bag designs, over 13 different hospitals. They used to be so heavy as well – they were like suitcases.

"This bag is completely standardised – and the 'patient pocket' means that there's always space for any specific drugs or equipment too," she said. "It's so easy to use, whether you're transferring a patient to or from A&E, into critical care, or into surgery."

Details of the design of the new bag, including a full list of all items included in it, has also been published in the [Journal of the Intensive Care Society](#).



'Game-changing' bag for transferring critically ill patients

Catherine Forsythe



'Game-changing' bag for transferring critically ill patients

Patient Transfer Bag