

iPad Mini launch at children's cancer ward

Fledgling children's cancer charity Ben's Heroes Trust is donating 10 iPad minis to a London hospital for youngsters undergoing treatment to enable them to keep up with school work and friends.

The young cancer patients at University College Hospital in London are being given the tablets so they can keep in touch with their schools and friends to stop them falling too far behind with their studies.

The idea, by the Hampshire-based charity, is backed by recent statistics showing that 47% of parents said their child had grown apart from friends and their learning impacted because of their cancer treatment.

The inspiration for the iPad 'library' at University College Hospital came from

Kate Ross and Simon Loyns, Trustees of Ben's Heroes Trust, who tragically lost their son, Ben, to cancer in 2010. Whilst undergoing his treatment Ben found his iPad invaluable in allowing him to stay in touch with family and friends, as well as distracting him during long and often painful procedures.

His parents felt very strongly that this should be available to all children undergoing treatment and so proposed the library of iPad minis.

Kate Ross said: "Ben had a number of prolonged stays in hospital, during which time he was able to keep up with what was going on at school, with his friends and with his sister at home by using email and Facebook, as well as researching school work and stopping him (and us!) from getting bored.



A patient with an iPad from the new hospital 'library'

“When looking for projects for Ben’s Heroes Trust to support we strongly felt that this was a benefit that should be available to all children undergoing treatment for cancer. We are hoping to roll this project out to other specialist units to ensure that children being treated on the specialist cancer wards around the UK can maintain those links with their friends at this difficult time.”

Louisa Wright, Macmillan Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist at University College Hospital, said: “The hardest element of treatment that children will face is being away from family and friends and coping with the boredom of an 'alien environment'.

“The iPads Ben Heroes Trust have donated will go a long way to allowing children to communicate with family and friends with whom they have been separated by means of apps like Skype, Facebook and other social media sites.

“The play specialists can use the apps like ‘Where's Wally’ and ‘Gina the talking Giraffe’ to distract patients undergoing painful or long distressing procedures. In general the children can use the iPads to play games and watch TV and movies that can provide an added distraction to reduce anxiety levels and make the inpatient experience a better one, making it easier to come back each time for more treatment.”

Recently cancer charity for children and young people, CLIC Sargent, looked at the educational and social impact of a cancer diagnosis on children. Its report, ‘No Child With Cancer Left Out’ highlighted many issues associated with non-attendance at school due to their cancer treatment and 47% of parents said that their child had grown apart from friends because of diagnosis and treatment.

The report states: “Many of these children are at a critical stage in their development – at a point in their primary school education where they are laying down the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy and building their emotional intelligence through friendships.”

Now those children at University College Hospital will have the opportunity to catch up with friends and feel part of school events virtually from their hospital ward.

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