

VAS
Well
100
0
Unwell

PANAS
Positive
adjectives
Active
Alert
Attentive
Determined
Enthusiastic
Excited
Inspired
Interested
Proud
Strong
Negative
adjectives
Afraid
Ashamed
Distressed
Guilty
Hostile
Irritable
Jittery
Nervous
Scared
Upset

How was wellbeing measured?

A review was carried out of existing scales for measuring health status, quality of life and wellbeing. The Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) and the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) were chosen since they appeared both practical to use and sensitive to any changes in wellbeing. The PANAS is a list of 10 positive and 10 negative mood adjectives. The VAS is a vertical scale running from zero to 100.

The scales were used before and after each session to compare baseline measures with any effects of handling. Participants indicated exactly how they felt at those particular points in time by rating each of the PANAS adjectives out of five and assessing their levels of wellbeing and happiness out of 100 using two VAS scales.

What did we find?

When before and after session measures were compared statistically, all patient groups showed increases in positive emotion, wellbeing and happiness. Patients were distracted from their clinical surroundings and felt happier and healthier as a result of the handling sessions.

How do we know the objects had an effect?

The study used a 'control group' where a subset of participants did not take part in object handling, instead they looked at photographs of the same objects. Statistical comparison of the control and handling measures demonstrated that handling the objects led to significantly greater improvements in wellbeing and happiness than viewing the photographs.

How did participant respond to the questions?

- What does this object feel like?**
'It's gorgeous and lovely texture as well, like marble, the same effect.'
- What do you think it is made of?**
'Something like earthenware but it's so cool and smooth, it's beautifully smooth, it's a wonderful piece.'
- Is there anything it reminds you of?**
'The underside of this object reminds me of my tortoise.'
'Yes, it's like chocolate chip ice-cream'
- How do you feel about it?**
'I love things like this. I could sit here for hours with things like this.'
'I think this is something amazing. Especially, something that old, kept in this condition.'



To find out more

Further information, findings from the study, publications and a best practice 'how to' guide available at:
www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/research/touch/wellbeing

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Healing Heritage

An outline of research conducted as part of the AHRC funded project
Heritage in Hospitals





How it started

In 2008, researchers and curators from University College London (UCL) and University College London Hospitals (UCLH) Arts developed a unique programme called *Heritage in Hospitals* funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The objective of this innovative programme was to take museum objects to the bedsides of hospital patients and older people in care homes in order to understand the impact of handling and discussing the objects on participants' wellbeing and happiness.

Background

As with Arts in Health activities, the aims of *Heritage in Hospitals* were to improve the wellbeing of patients and their experience of staying in hospital, boost morale among staff and carers, and widen access to the arts, culture and heritage.

Significant evidence from Arts in Health interventions has shown positive therapeutic and medical outcomes for patients, including:

- Reduction in stress, anxiety and depression**
- Lowering of blood pressure, pain intensity and need for medication**
- Improvements in health, particularly mental health**
- Decrease in the length of patient stay**



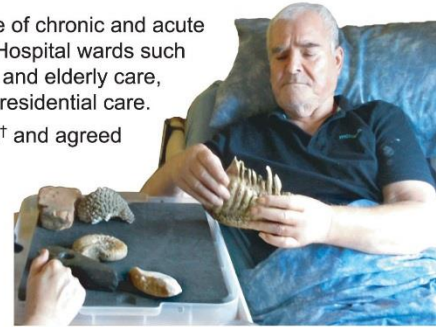
Who took part?

Participants comprised 250 patients from a range of chronic and acute healthcare settings including University College Hospital wards such as oncology, gynaecological oncology and acute and elderly care, stroke rehabilitation units, psychiatric wards and residential care.

Patients gave their informed consent to take part[†] and agreed to digital audio recording.

Which objects were used?

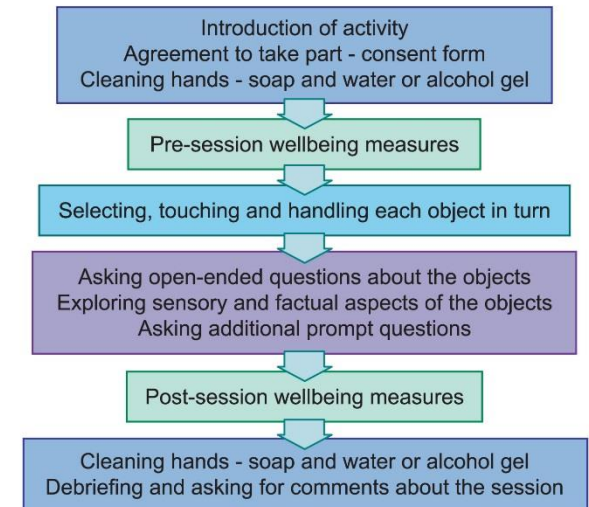
The museum objects used for the sessions consisted of archaeological artefacts, artworks, and geology and natural history specimens selected from UCL Museums & Collections[‡]. Six handling boxes were compiled, each with six different objects.



What happened in the sessions?

The handling sessions consisted of one-to-one discussions carried out at patients' and care home residents' bedsides. Sessions followed an established format, as shown below.

Participants were asked to comment on the reasons for their initial choice of object and were then prompted by further questions (see over) to explore its sensory and emotional aspects. Participants were encouraged to handle and discuss each object in turn. Key facts sheets were provided to address specific questions, such as the age of an object.



[†] Research Ethics Committee approval MREC No: 06/Q0505/78

[‡] To find out more about UCL Museums & Collections visit:
www.ucl.ac.uk/museums