

Enlightening Virtual Dementia Tour

PRESS RELEASE

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A mobile virtual dementia tour bus that takes away people's primary senses visited Russells Hall Hospital to give NHS staff a realistic glimpse into the condition that affects 850,000 people in the UK.

The Mobile Virtual Dementia Tour allows people to experience the fear and frustration people with dementia go through on a daily basis.

Staff who took the tour experienced a range of simulative distortion which robbed them of their senses to recreate the isolation and fear that people with dementia may experience every day.

Staff wore goggles to replicate impaired vision, gloves to restrict movement and shoe inserts to create peripheral neuropathy (weakness, numbness and pain in the feet) associated with dementia.

As participants tried to perform daily activities, amplified sounds, flashing lights and restricted movement trapped them into a simulated world of fear and frustration.

Lead nurse for mental health Emma Hammond, said, "The tour was extremely thought provoking and a great experience to develop an understanding of what people living with dementia might experience. I believe this will enable me to improve patient care."

Communications Apprentice Lauryn Edwards, whose auntie Elsie was diagnosed with the condition at the age of 93, boarded the virtual dementia tour bus.

"The tour was scary; I was unable to move properly or think clearly. It took me out of my comfort zone," said Lauryn, who was one of her aunt's carers.

"I now understand that people with dementia are not aggressive and complicated, but scared, confused and isolated. It also explains why they shuffle when they're walking.

"I wish I'd taken part in the tour before my Auntie Elsie died in 2012. I would have understood her behaviour and looked after her better."

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For more information, please call Lauryn Edwards, Communications Apprentice for The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, on (01384) 456111 extension 1431 or email lauryn.edwards@nhs.net