What was the challenge?

When patients are informed about their condition and the therapy that will be put into place, they are invited to the interview room. It is a small room, without windows and with bare walls. It is positive to have a private room for this delicate procedure, but it does not really help the anxiety of patients and relatives. The challenge was to make the room a more welcoming and bearable space, keeping in mind infection control measures.

What is the impact?

As yet, the art and design interventions for the interview room are not in place. Instead we can look at a similar project - the Multifaith room in the Palliative Care Unit, which has been completed recently. This room has had a very positive impact on the patients as well as the staff. It is a space where one can feel held and find the aesthetic balance that helps one to connect with the self.

The interventions to the interview room are part of a broader project entitled Deep Shelter Project (DSP), an artist in residence programme at the Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre (SAMOC). Using collaborative research, it aims to bring art-based modalities through a series of sensory-based workshops for patients and staff, as well as art works and design interventions into this clinical space. Together they aim to support the patients in their journey and the staff in their daily work.

How design helped?

A group of staff, artists and designers was brought together to reflect on the challenge. The first exercise was to identify the positive elements about the room. Then negative elements were added, along with reasons why the room needed to be changed. A mapping scenario was created showing all possibilities, opportunities or threats and all negative outcomes. This led to the identification of key interventions that could help improve the situation immediately, and changes that could be done in the long term.

A series of workshops followed, this time only attended by artists, focused on the challenge. They identified the following disciplines: light, sound, smell. As mentioned these generated three core problems: it was a very small room, the room was too warm and the waiting and interview process took place within the same space. The focus was on how to attenuate the problem and support the emotional and psychological processes happening within the interview room. Thus it is required to develop interventions that would stimulate strategies and approaches.

To get inspiration for the design and the art works that could lighten up the space the group of artists went into the countryside. The pictures taken and the impressions gathered became the basis for the creation of possible art works and design interventions for the interview room.

The programme started mid-2016 with artist Pamela Baldacchino as coordinator. It is part of Valletta 2018’s Artist in Residence programme. By now one notices that DSP is slowly changing the atmosphere in what was a bare and clinical building. It shows that collaboration and interaction between artists, staff and patients can lead to a more liveable environment.

Design and Art Interventions
Interview Room Day Ward
Company: Deep Shelter Project (DSP) Artist residence programme at the Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre (SAMOC)

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Improved hospital environments

Design4Innovation partner: Valletta 2018 Foundation
Country: Malta