

WALK THE WARD

How can elderly people challenge themselves to be more active when hospitalized? And how can we reduce social isolation of hospitalized patients? Here we used a type of game as therapy.

WHY?

An older population means that there are more people suffering from chronic diseases and more people requiring hospitalization. This is contributing to a crisis in the healthcare system, because the financial resources, the number of trained healthcare workers, and the number of hospital beds are not growing at the same rate.

Technology can help deal with this crisis by reducing the workload on healthcare workers and by helping patients to take control of their own health so that they live a healthier life and require fewer and shorter hospital stays. Because healthcare is governed by many rules and regulations, it is sometimes difficult to find ways to introduce technological innovations

WHAT?

The Walk the Ward project looks specifically at elderly, hospitalized patients and how technology could improve their experience. Hospitalized patients can be bored, lonely, fatigued and may feel pain or fear. In addition, the trend towards single rooms results in patients rarely leaving their rooms, which leads to isolation, a reduction of social contact, and a decrease of physical exercise.

The project investigates how modern technology can activate patients in a way that has a positive impact on both mental and physical states, thus facilitating recovery, while at the same time not putting greater burden on the hospital staff. Movement and social interaction are important for physical and mental health. The researchers have developed a patient-focused technological solution that could improve health and reduce healthcare costs, without engaging directly with prohibitive regulations.

HOW?

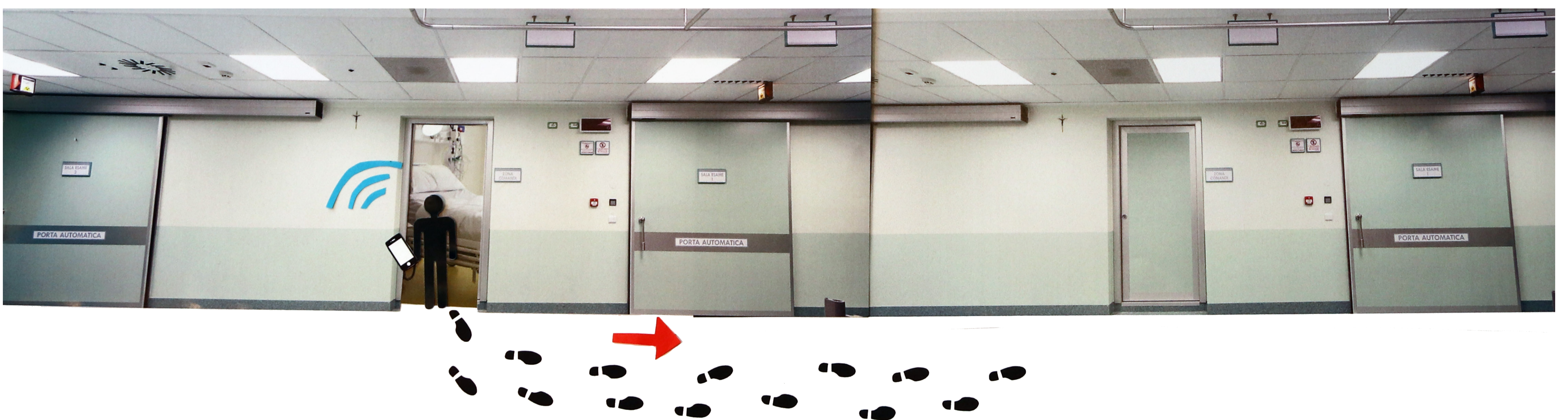
WALK THE WARD is a tablet based, quiz-type game played by hospitalized patients to provide entertainment, social interaction and, most importantly, exercise, which promotes healing. Educational information is also provided in the game. The patients need to walk from one station (poster with QR code) to another in the ward. At each station they scan the QR code and are given a new question to answer. The game rewards correct answers and tracks the number of steps the patient has walked while going from station to station.

A test in a hospital ward at Skåne University Hospital showed that patients were more active when they had WALK THE WARD, were more likely to engage in social interaction while playing, and both patients and hospital staff were positive about the game. If it can be shown that increased physical activity and reduced social isolation through the use of such a game significantly reduces the length of hospital stays, this will provide motivation for decision makers to formally incorporate new technologies such as this into the broader healthcare environment.

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Application area: SMART HEALTH

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USE AND ABUSE?

Through the WALK THE WARD game, the researchers were trying to change patients' behavior. Is it wrong to manipulate people in this way? Should the information about the patient's use of WALK THE WARD, such as number of steps, be shared with the patient's physician