

UK firm pioneers technology to help communication in hospitals

A new and innovative UK business has developed a collection of digital flashcards to address the problems healthcare workers wearing Personal Protective Equipment were having in transferring vital information to deaf, blind and critically ill coronavirus patients.

CARDMEDIC, founded by NHS anaesthetist Dr Rachael Grimaldi while on maternity leave, launched at the beginning of April and is already available in 10 languages. Dr Grimaldi was inspired by a news article about a COVID-19 patient who was admitted to intensive care and became worried when he couldn't understand what his healthcare providers were saying through their face masks, visors and hoods.

The communication aids can be used in electronic format on the patient's or hospital's phone, tablet, smart device or desktop. As well as the visual aspects helping to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing patients, CARDMEDIC also includes a "read aloud" option for patients who are either too unwell or unable to read, or those partially sighted or blind.

The communication flashcards are free to download on CARDMEDIC's website, which has seen more than 7,800 users in 49 countries across 6 continents since its launch on 1 April 2020. Going from concept to launch in just 72 hours, CARDMEDIC is now being used by NHS Trusts all over the UK and frontline hospital staff across Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and the United States.

Dr Rachael Grimaldi at CARDMEDIC said:

Unable to be patient-facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was desperate to do something to help while on maternity leave. What started out as me wondering if healthcare staff could use a pen and paper to communicate with patients, within 72 hours, turned into an online A-Z index of digital flashcards.

Initially, I thought I would share the site with colleagues at Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust, and it would hopefully help make a difference to a few patients. I never envisaged it would have grown so rapidly and at such pace. I am overwhelmed by the generosity in time and expertise from so many organisations, colleagues, friends and family.

Our trade advisor from the Department for International Trade has been fantastic and introduced me to a wide range of business contacts which has helped enormously.

The Department for International Trade has supported CARDMEDIC since its launch date by connecting Dr Grimaldi with local businesses in Brighton including digital consultancy Grow Global which provided a free website review. CARDMEDIC's dedicated trade advisor also provided the business with advice to apply for the Innovate UK competition to receive funding.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

CARDMEDIC is one of the many businesses working hard to support our NHS at a crucial time, and I am proud to see them already making a global impact and helping save lives”.

This is a truly innovative product that could change the future of the healthcare industry and be widely applied across the world long after the pandemic.

CARDMEDIC is now set to provide its flashcards in 30 different languages in the coming weeks, and is currently working with a hospital in Australia to translate them into African, Asian and European dialects.

The business is also developing an app which will include illustrations and videos for British Sign Language, as well as creating downloadable PDF versions for healthcare professionals to print, laminate, write on, wipe off and reuse.

Notes to Editors

If you would like to learn more about CARDMEDIC or how you can support them, please contact info@cardmedic.com.