Libraries without walls

Connecting hospital patients with public library resources

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CITY OF MONASH

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Meet Eleni

Eleni is an international student who was rushed into unexpected surgery.

Although the surgery went well, the recovery period is isolating. Eleni is alone and left with long hours that lead to overthinking and anxiety.

A translator gives Eleni a flyer about signing up for membership with the local public library.

Being tech savvy Eleni immediately signs up on their phone from their hospital bed.

Why library eResources?

01.
Wellbeing

- Reduce boredom
- Improve emotional wellbeing [1]
- Stay connected, engaged and mentally stimulated
- Maintain cognitive engagement

02.
Health

- Manage pain, anxiety and stress [2]
- Access safe, hygienic reading materials

03.
Equity

- Access multilingual and accessible materials [3]
- Patients without financial means
- Access materials instantly and continue after discharge

Partnership goals



Patient wellbeing

Empowering health care consumers with reliable, high-quality resources is associated with health outcomes [4,5]

01.



Training

As many patients need support with digital tools, hospital staff and volunteers are trained in a train-the-trainer style model

02.



Collaboration

Cross-sector collaboration between libraries to improve literacy, health and wellbeing in the communities we serve

03.



Advanced equity

Connect vulnerable patients with public libraries for community connection and support post discharge

04.

Stakeholder roles



Public library

Provides training, resources, technical support, posters, flyers and multilingual guides

Health service

Patient experience approves patient information & ward staff introduce the public library to patients

Volunteers

Take time to support patients and their supporters with account and device set-up

Patients & their supporters

New library members who benefit from immediate access to a wealth of digital resources

Program design



01

Library training

- Requires close collaboration between the hospital and public library

02

Clinical staff & volunteers

- Ward staff & hospital volunteers train patients and carers

03

Digital access

- Patients receive digital access

Training model



Signing up

- How to sign up for online library membership

Install & navigate

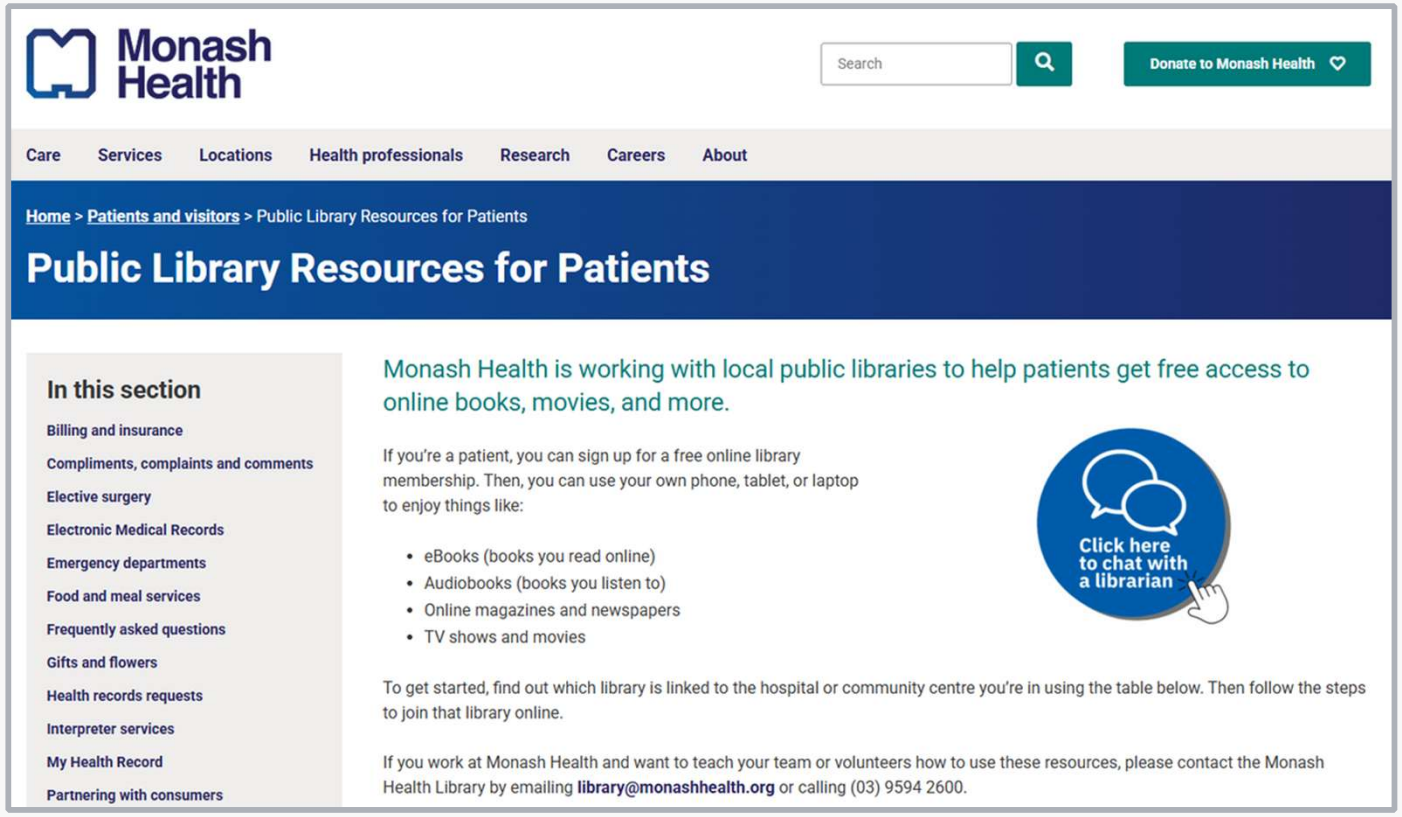
- Installing and navigating library and eResource websites and apps

Support

- Accessibility features
- Multilingual options
- Troubleshooting

Resources developed

- **User guides**
  Customised for the health care environment
- **Communication**
  Coordinated by the hospital library
- **Posters**
  Distributed to wards and patient waiting areas
- **Website**
  Consolidates information for patients and their supporters



Outcomes & impact

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Patient experience

- Improved patient experience
- Improved wellbeing
- Benefits for health care outcomes

NSQHS accreditation

- Important criteria for hospital accreditation throughout Australia [6]
- Consumer engagement requirement

Diversification

- Library moved beyond supporting clinical patron groups

Monash Public Library Service

Achieves missions & goals

- *Wellbeing in Victoria* [7]
- Monash Council's Mission
- Action Plans

Demonstrates value

- Library visibility
- Increased statistics
- Value to funders

Community and staff impact

- Reach underserved community
- Increased staff confidence

Measuring success

Statistics & usage

- Difficult to measure
- No differentiation for online memberships or eResource usage
- Qualitative data through check-ins and feedback
- Plans for a survey
- Potential for a before/after research project utilising a boredom scale

"Mental Health patients have benefited greatly from being able to join the public library during their stay, giving them access to digital and physical resources that support wellbeing and meaningful engagement.

The training provided increased staff confidence in recommending digital library resources as part of recovery-oriented care.

Patients particularly appreciated having free access to eAudiobooks, eBooks, eMovies, magazines and wellbeing content, especially those without their own devices or who normally struggle to access community resources.

Many reported that these resources helped reduce boredom, improved their mood, and provided a constructive coping tool during their hospital stay.

This partnership aligns beautifully with recovery principles by supporting choice, connection and meaningful activity.

We have created our own ward library chill out space where patients can relax and read books and magazines or play board games (with thanks to Monash Public Library for the donations!)"

Challenges & keys to success





Challenges

- Time constraints
- Digital skill variability

Keys to success

- Close collaboration
- Short training sessions
- Easy-to-read instructions

Future directions

- **Scale up**
  Increase training and advocacy to more wards at Monash Medical Centre
- **Expand**
  Expand to other hospital sites: Monash Children's and the Victorian Heart Hospital
- **Multilingual**
  Additional multilingual resources for priority resources
- **Evaluate**
  Measuring usage and long-term retention of library customers post discharge



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Thank you

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