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What matters to you?

We asked the children, their families and the staff and found so much hidden but useful and valuable information in creating a new ward for children.

I hope in my subject for this PNAE 2016 Congress to show how innovation and involvement can inspire children, parents and staff as co-designers together with professional designers, anthropologists, builders and supporters to create an inspiring children's ward.

Our challenge was that all the children from age 0-17 years would feel comfortable in the different situations that occur during a hospital-stay.

Small children (0-3 years) require surroundings where they can play safely close to their parents.

Children aged from 4 to 12 years require surroundings where they can explore 'the whole world' with or without their parents. This age group loves activities such as climbing, running and biking.

Young people from 13-17 years want privacy, with access to computers, smartphones, music and time with friends. Their parents play a minor role in their lives.

When we asked children and young people to pick a ward-theme from six choices, including Cyber-space, Water-world, Circus, Forest with animals, they all wanted Forest with animals. When we asked the parents and staff, we got the same answer.

As the theme was set, we started a two-year journey with a fixed goal, but we didn't know exactly how to reach that goal.

Our challenge was that we still had to function as a children's hospital while it was renovated and extended by 800m². It was often difficult for the professionals to keep the children away from the construction areas and dangerous machinery. The builders sometimes invited the children and parents to watch while they worked, which was helpful for staff as it gave the children funny experiences to enjoy.

Three years have passed since the official opening of the ward, and we still love it and are so proud to welcome and admit the children to these surroundings.

In the first year we had more than 20 visits from other hospitals, committees, builders and designers who wanted to be inspired by this innovative way of creating ideas with hospital consumers and staff.

I hope my speech inspires other European children's departments to innovate and gain from the information you can collect from patients when you ask: what matters to you when we create a new ward?