

Evaluating a major innovation in hospital design: workforce implications and impact on patient and staff experiences of all single room hospital accommodation

Jill Maben,^{1*} Peter Griffiths,² Clarissa Penfold,¹
Michael Simon,² Elena Pizzo,³ Janet Anderson,¹
Glenn Robert,¹ Jane Hughes,¹ Trevor Murrells,¹
Sally Brearley¹ and James Barlow³

¹National Nursing Research Unit, Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery (formerly Florence Nightingale School of Nursing and Midwifery), King's College London, London, UK

²Centre for Innovation and Leadership in Health Sciences, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK

³Imperial College Business School, London, UK

*Corresponding author

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Plain English summary

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We explored the impact of moving from traditional Nightingale-style hospital wards to 100% single room patient accommodation in a newly built hospital. Before and after the move, we compared the ways in which care was delivered, staff and patient experiences, levels of patient safety and costs on four wards. We also compared what happened on these wards with similar wards in two other hospitals which did not have all single rooms.

We used several methods to collect information on the impact of single rooms, including interviews with senior managers, doctors and Allied Health Professionals, and interviews with nurses and patients. We also conducted a survey with staff, observed routine, day-to-day practice on the wards, used pedometers to find out how far staff walked and examined routine safety and staffing information.

Staff reported that patient comfort and confidentiality was better but felt that visibility and patient monitoring, teamwork, safeguarding and being close to patients were all worse. Giving enough attention to each patient and discussing care with colleagues was difficult. Nurses' walking distances increased significantly after the move. The nursing tasks undertaken did not change, but nurses needed to change the way they worked and did not feel prepared for this. Staff preferred a mix of single rooms and bays. Patients preferred single rooms for comfort and privacy but some felt isolated. There was no strong evidence that single rooms had any impact on patient safety. Housekeeping and cleaning costs were higher after the move.

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Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk

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