During our second round of seed funding, we were once again overwhelmed with creative ideas that improve patient care. In total, we received 46 applications from across the care spectrum. They included the simple, like iPads to improve communicating with refugees, to the very complicated, like a robotic arm to help recovering patients. No matter their complexity, all of the ideas had this in common: a big impact on our patients.

Inpatient Hair Care

The need for specialized hair care is one of the surprising requests that the information desk and customer service get. Patients, who at times are hospitalized for weeks or even months, often find that they cannot care for their hair to the same extent that they would at home. While the nursing staff ensure that patients have clean hair, some patients report being reluctant to leave their room because they have “hospital bed head.” Providing an extra level of hair care in the hospital enhances a patient’s well-being, confidence, and improves their ability to endure what can be a challenging time in their life. Local stylists will volunteer their time to provide services such as haircuts, shampoo treatments, and beard trims. The team hopes the program will contribute to the Exceptional Patient Experience by helping patients feel pampered and refreshed.
My Story

Patients on the Inpatient Medical Rehab Unit often spend weeks or months there, giving their caregivers plenty of time to get to know them. However, patients have expressed feelings of frustration as well-meaning members of the care team ask them the same questions about their life over and over. My Story hopes to help staff connect with patients on a personal level and highlight what is important in their lives, without the same repetitive questions. The process is simple. Once the patient is admitted they are presented with the My Story brochure and asked if they want to participate in the program. The patient or family fills out the brochure. The brochure is then posted in the room. The care team, including physicians, nurses, therapists, dietary aides, etc., can then read the patient’s story. The purpose of My Story is to personalize the care we provide by learning patients’ stories and engaging them and their families in care planning and decision-making.

Imagine... if your caregivers could know a little bit about you as a person before they cared for you.

Boredom Busters

Hospitalized patients experience fear, anxiety, and boredom. This is especially true for patients on our Acute Internal Medicine Unit (AIMA), who often have long admissions or are frequently readmitted to the unit. In the past, AIMA has had great success in helping patients break feelings of worry and boredom with a set of “boredom busters,” which includes things like games, puzzles and movies. However, they have gotten so much use over the years that they are now worn out or missing pieces, and patients cannot experience their calming effects. This project revitalizes and replenishes the boredom busters on AIMA so they can once again be a resource for patients. They’ll provide activities that decrease anxiety, distract from pain, help staff connect with patients, and improve the overall patient experience.

Imagine... providing engaging activities for patients and their families.

U of U Scrub Hats

While the Hair Care seed grant project was getting off the ground, the Imagine Perfect Care team wanted to find a more immediate solution for patients who were uncomfortable leaving their room due to “bed head.” Kathy Adamson, Administrative Director for Surgical Services, had the perfect answer: U of U scrub hats! Kathy’s team had previously commissioned scrub hats sewn from special U of U-inspired fabric for surgeons and surgical staff, and she had a few extra boxes of the popular hats in storage. When Kathy heard about the project, she enthusiastically donated hats to the customer service team, and patient Ernie Morris was one of the first happy recipients. Customer service specialist Terri Berg met Ernie on her unit rounds, and learned that he would be in the hospital at least 2 weeks—a prime candidate for the scrub hat. Ernie was thrilled with his new look and plans on accessorizing his U scrub hat with red pants, black shirt, and white sunglasses.
Hand-Sani Moment

Project Leads: Polly Dacus, RN, Karie Haws, RN

Burnout is a problem in healthcare, and it has the potential to affect every member of the organization, which in turn affects patients. This has made a renewed focus on resiliency and mindfulness critical to ensuring that staff are healthy and able to care for patients. This project hopes to capitalize on the reality that everyone must sanitize their hands before, during, and after interacting with a patient. The project transforms this act from a hygiene task into a moment to practice mindfulness. Every time a staff member sanitizes their hands, they can pause, breathe, clear their mind, and practice awareness. As staff are more aware and present they are better able to care for patients. This project will begin with a pilot in the Emergency Department and has the potential to spread throughout the institution.

Imagine... clearing your mind while you clean your hands.

Lightening the Load for EVS

Project Leads: Ischa Jensen, Jessica Rivera, Shegi Thomas, RN

While sheets and pillows may represent relaxation and rest, they represent a real threat to the health and performance of our environmental services staff. Lifting and transporting soiled linen bags is hard on bodies and has led to multiple workplace injuries. Staff focus groups even revealed that the biggest impact on their job satisfaction is transporting large quantities of linens. In an effort to lighten the load for EVS, this pilot project develops pulley systems and power carts to relieve the stress staff experience when handling linens. The effort will begin at the South Jordan Health Center and Burn Unit, with the potential to spread if successful. Providing patients a clean environment for healing is so important. This project ensures staff have the tools they need to complete their duties and contribute to our patients’ care.

Imagine... decreasing workloads so employees don’t get hurt.

Robotic Arm Assistant

Project Lead: Jeffrey Rosenbluth, MD

For patients in the Inpatient Medical Rehab Unit, having independence and choice is key to their recovery from injury and illness. Unfortunately, limitations in technology and equipment often leave them with limited control over their environment. The robotic arm assistant aims to restore freedom and choice to these patients. This electronic arm is equipped with facial recognition and a monitor so patients can control lighting, room temperature, and multimedia systems. Additionally, it allows them to text, email, and check their social media. The technology is unique in that it is adaptable to the needs and abilities of each patient. It can be controlled by voice, joystick, eye movement, switches, and the mouth, ensuring that even the most impaired patients can independently, gracefully, and precisely control the system.

Imagine... controlling everything with anything.
Tooth Technology

Since receiving support in the initial round of Imagine Perfect Care funding, the team has started to bring their vision to life. They assembled a team with members from dentistry, engineering, implant technology, and the life sciences. Together they developed and prototyped technology capable of sensing and responding to different signals in the body via the mouth. They are now proving that this technology works not only on the bench but in the body, and that it can be scaled to fit into various dental fixtures. Once human scale prototypes are produced and tested, this technology will be ready for further testing and production. If successful, it could change the way that chronic disease is monitored and treated.

Imagine...

a tooth helping to control chronic disease.

Neuromuscular Assistive Devices

Patients of the Nerve and Muscle Clinic (Muscular Dystrophy Association Clinic) often have unique needs due to their chronic and progressive functional limitation. The currently available, mass-produced adaptive equipment rarely meets their unique needs. Additionally, the equipment is often expensive and can take months to arrive after an order is placed. Physical therapists at the clinic are using 3D printing technology to solve these problems. With 3D printing, they can create assistive devices that are unique to each patient’s needs, at a fraction of the cost and time of traditional equipment. Technology implemented in this manner helps patient achieve a level of function and independence that would otherwise be impossible.

Imagine...

access to customized adaptive equipment with 3D printing.

Patient Voice in Neurology Care

Patients with Huntington's disease or neuromuscular diseases (e.g. ALS, Duchene muscular dystrophy, myotonic dystrophy) go to multidisciplinary clinics in the neurology department where they see not only their physician, but other healthcare workers like pulmonologists, nurses, clinical pharmacists, social workers, physical therapists, genetic counselors, and study coordinators. All professionals work together to treat the patient and family; however, the approach means these visits can also be quite lengthy and fatiguing. To improve the coordination of these visits, and to ensure that patients and care partners are as informed about their conditions as possible, these clinics will implement a new program using tablets to capture disease-specific concerns and to provide educational resources. Patients keep the tablets with them throughout their visit, answering questions and accessing educational materials along the way. The hope is that this project enhances holistic care by addressing more of the patient’s and care partner’s concerns, provides access to disease-specific information and resources for educational purposes, improves information-gathering to expedite clinic visits, and expands and improves identification of areas that are addressed in subsequent visits.

Imagine...

improving quality of care and education for neurology patients in specialty clinics.
Head and Neck Cancer Recovery Tracking

Head and neck cancer patients often undergo long surgeries with extensive reconstruction, resulting in prolonged hospital stays and complex discharge planning. This process is often overwhelming and can result in patient and family confusion and decreased patient compliance. A visual outline using magnets, images, and timelines will improve communication between care providers, increase patient involvement, and improve discharge planning, resulting in a better patient experience with decreased cost. The team is partnering with the Spark Design Lab on main campus to ensure that these visual outlines meet the needs of patients and providers and are designed in an easy-to-use way.

Speaking Their Language

Imagine being a refugee or newly arrived immigrant, being ill or needing vaccines, and not speaking English. Many of the families who seek medical care and dental care at the South Main Clinic are in this exact situation. To address this issue, South Main will use two specially-formatted iPads that provide translation services for non-English speakers, including those who need ASL interpretation. This project will help this patient population to access care materials in their native language and ensure they have a firm understanding of their care.

Positive Psychology Intervention

Heart failure and depression frequently coexist in patients. The literature demonstrates that identification of depression, paired with proactive and adequate treatment, are integral components in improving heart failure patients’ long-term outcomes. Patients who suffer from depression are more likely to have higher readmission rates, poorer self-care and medication adherence rates, and higher adverse events. To address the occurrence of depression in heart failure patients, this program will use positive psychology, guidance, and self-reflection. The intervention will be delivered over six weeks through a combination of written materials, in-person discussion, and phone calls. Patients will be given a manual with exercises for them to complete each week. By providing real-time identification and treatment for depression, the intention is to treat a comorbidity of heart failure that directly relates to hospital readmission rates and adverse events. The group completed a pilot of their work in the Cardiovascular Clinic and are now running a second pilot in Cardiac Rehab.
Maternal Newborn Discharge Tracking

While having a baby can be one of the most joyful experiences in life, the associated hospital stay can prove to be somewhat stressful. A lot needs to be done in a short amount of time to ensure that both mother and baby are ready to go home. This opens the possibility that patients may feel confused and out of the loop about what has been done and what is still left to do. To make this process easier and clearer for both patients and the care team, the Maternal Newborn Care Unit uses tracking boards. These boards list everything that needs to be done for both mother and baby on easy-to-read magnetic cards. As a task is completed, the card is flipped to show a checkmark. This allows everyone to know what else needs to be done before the patients can be discharged, alleviating stress and promoting a smooth discharge. The unit is partnering with the Spark Design Lab on main campus to ensure that these trackers meet the needs of both patients and providers.

Imagine... all patients can speak to and understand their healthcare providers.

Postdural Headaches Treatment Study

New mothers receiving an epidural for labor pain relief are at a high risk for headaches. The symptoms of this headache tend to be extremely debilitating in affected patients, severely limiting their functional capacity until the headache is gone. The compromise is even greater since new mothers also need to care for a newborn. The time after birth is important for forming attachment and encompasses many new obligations for the new mother. The project implements new interventions aimed at treating and relieving these headaches in new mothers. It allows patients to undergo a less invasive treatment for their symptoms, allowing new mothers to better care for themselves and their newborns.

Imagine... providing relief of headaches in new mothers.

Distraction Sedation

Surgery can be stressful enough as it is, but having to be awake for surgery can take patients’ stress and pain to new heights. Distraction techniques are becoming more common for patients in awake procedures as an alternative to increased levels of sedation medication. This project allows patients to watch Netflix or listen to music on an iPad during the course of their surgery. Providing this distraction will improve patient satisfaction and quality of care by reducing anxiety and medications.

Imagine... enjoying a movie while you are having surgery.

From the IPC TEAM

Selecting 18 projects out of 46 ideas was no easy task. We developed a thorough review process to make it a little easier. The Imagine Perfect Care team, our connector network, and executive leadership all provided input. We also posted the ideas on the Spark website so that every employee had the chance to weigh-in and be inspired. We were delighted to be able to fund 18 projects, we hope to continue to engage with your ideas as we all work together to provide our patients perfect care.
Imagine Perfect Care recognizes that good ideas are born every day, not just once a year when we call for your Seed Funding project ideas. With that in mind, we are excited to announce a new funding program for University of Utah Health employees, Imagine Perfect Care Mini Grants.

These grants give fuel to those projects that need a little help getting started. The types of projects that are funded vary greatly, but they must improve patient care or the patient experience to be considered.

Imagine Perfect Care encourages submissions by frontline staff. We believe you know your patients best. Don’t feel deterred from applying if you’ve never submitted a grant or ran a project before. The process is simple and straightforward so that the focus stays on your patients. Additionally, we offer project management and other resources to help make your idea a reality.

If you have questions or want to start an application, please contact imagine@hsc.utah.edu or visit the Imagine Perfect Care Pulse page to download the application.

Acupuncture Pain Management

Cancer and its related treatments can be extremely painful for patients. Patient discomfort and a desire to reduce reliance on opioids has led to a need for new methods of treating pain. Acupuncture is one of the promising and impactful treatments that has been shown to reduce pain, reduce opioid use, and increase patient satisfaction. This project pilots the use of acupuncture for inpatients at Huntsman Cancer Hospital, with the hope of demonstrating the efficacy of the service and expanding its use in the health system.

Imagine... patients receiving therapeutic acupuncture pain interventions.

Local Anesthetic Drug Delivery System

There is a critical need for alternative therapies for controlling pain after an operation. The United States is experiencing an opioid crisis, with over 14,000 deaths from prescription opioids annually. For every 100 people who have surgery and receive a prescription for opioids, as many as 10 will develop an opioid misuse disorder. Surgeons need a safe, injectable, long-acting alternative to provide relief from post-operative pain that avoids the toxicity and potentially life-threatening risks associated with systemic opioids. This project will develop an injectable alternative that provides an extended period of pain relief. It is injected into the procedure site or injury, thereby eliminating pain at the site and reducing the need for other pain treatments.

Imagine... a non-opioid therapeutic for postoperative pain management.