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How Can Graphic Design Save Lives?

How can graphic design and designers improve healthcare in the UK?

Effective graphic design has the potential to transform healthcare in the United Kingdom by making critical information clearer, enhancing patient care, and eliminating health disparities through accessibility and effective visual communication. From intuitive hospital signage to well-designed public health campaigns, graphic design enhances understanding and determines that critical information can reach all of the population, ultimately contributing to better health outcomes. Throughout this essay I'm going to help provide examples and reasoning to why graphic design can achieve this and help save lives throughout the healthcare system and to why graphic design can be seen as not only an art form but as a vital tool for survival and growth. Graphic design is an underestimated power force that is capable of saving lives through visual communication and storytelling that can transform environments, empower communities, and raise awareness. This essay will involve several impactful ways graphic design contributes to life saving efforts such as improving communication, enhancing patient experience, promoting health and wellbeing and supporting healthcare marketing. However, I will be focusing on three main points involving how graphic design can save lives specifically within the health care system in the UK due to it being increasingly important in the healthcare system. **(Audu, 2023)**

The three points this essay will explore are, how campaigns for health and mental well-being, considerate wayfinding designs and product design can not only improve healthcare but also save lives. Graphic Design not only makes things aesthetic to look at and practical but saves lives by turning information into action, using storytelling to gain attraction and that thoughtful design is essential for individual and society's health and wellbeing.

Graphic design plays a very important role in a lot of different sectors, whether that's selling a product, a company using different advertising methods, using campaigns to raise awareness or in this case lifesaving matters. This essay's first portion will examine the many ways that graphic design has contributed to the creation of several life-saving initiatives that support health and wellbeing. First of all, there are many global campaigns that may help individuals take better care of their physical health, but this article will also highlight

campaigns that have saved the lives of numerous people worldwide. Studies have shown that if used thoughtfully graphic design can improve the understanding of health and wellbeing. This article shows that that using a mixture of online and offline graphic design features can remind people that health check-ups are necessary and vital to save lives. In this case, it has proved that designing an inclusive community-based campaign to promote testicular awareness can help many feels less embarrassed and more comfortable with seeking health guidance from professionals with the help of information being advertised carefully. This idea was confirmed by a co-design method from members of the LGBTQ+ community, testicular cancer survivors, health policy makers, media and marketing experts and graphic designers to come up with a way that could promote checking for testicular cancer to hopefully decrease the number of men embarrassed or scared to seek help and guidance. **(Saab, et al., 2024)** This type of research and data collection could definitely empower the use of graphic design campaigns allowing men to feel confident in seeking the professional health care they might need and potentially save lives as a study reported that 'only 38% of 18 to 34-year-olds are confident in recognising the signs of testicular cancer. That's despite it being the most common type of the disease to affect young men.' **(BBC, 2015)**. Another example of this could be the recent campaigns that were all over the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. The UK government and NHS repeatedly advertised these types of thought-provoking campaigns to stop people from breaking isolation and spreading the virus. This type of graphic design where it tells a story and grows empathy on those experiencing the struggle of living with COVID-19 can really make a different and help to save the lives of many people.

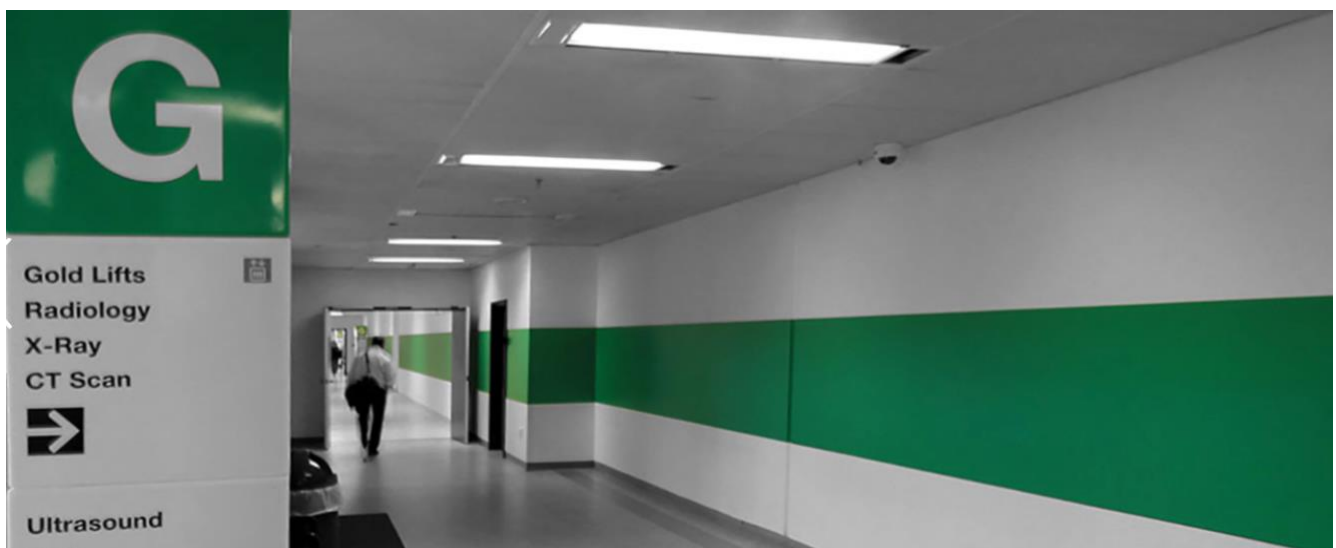


(Magee, 2021)

A second subject where graphic design can play a role in saving lives is creating effective wayfinding systems in hospitals to ensure visitors, patients and workers can navigate complex places with ease to improve their experience and role. Graphic design plays a key member in this process by creating visual systems such as clear signage, colour coding and symbols that communicate directions effectively to ensure hospitals are more accessible and user friendly. There can also be a very fine line between what works and doesn't work in these types of designs. Way finding needs to have the correct information in a clear format while not over detailing and confusing readers. **(Taylor , 2021)**

This is where the use of clever graphic design can be created to ensure successful and productive wayfinding system as those entering hospitals whether receiving healthcare or a loved one is this can be a very stressful time and wayfinding hopes to reduce that anxiety. Overall, this strategy has proved to make a positive outcome on patient care and saving lives due to knowing where to go themselves and for workers to get to saving lives as efficiently as possible. To determine a better experience for people in healthcare whether its patients, family members or staff graphic design's role in way finding hopes to reduce stress during a 'momentary disorientation' **(Genevieve Rogers, n.d.)**

Here are some examples of how the difference in wayfinding systems in hospitals can be overlooked or inefficient.



(Harkess - Ord, 2024)



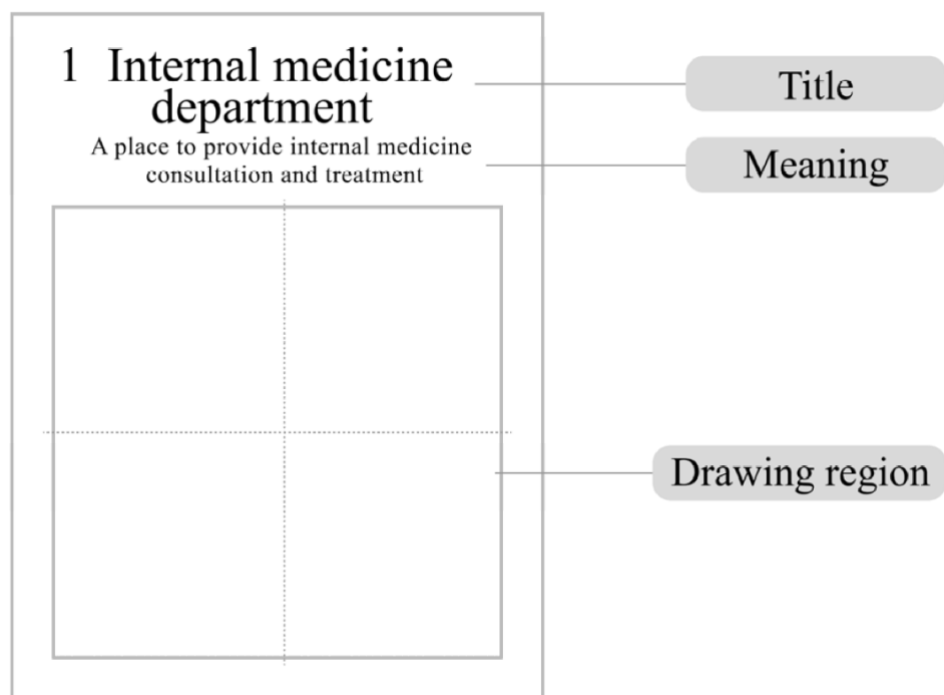
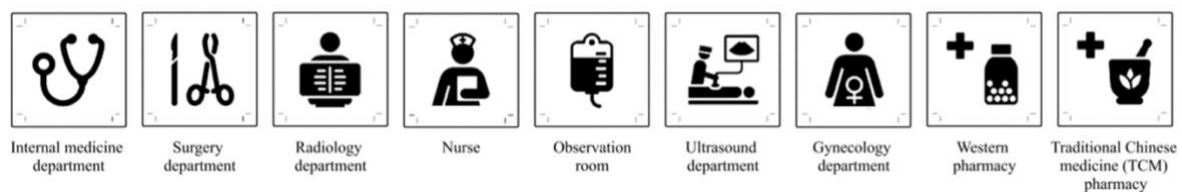
(Steph123Steph, 2016)

As you can see these two different formats of wayfinding are very different and can be quite obvious to which is most efficient. The first image shows how a design with clear signage, good use of font and colour coding can be better suited to hospitals due to it relating colours to wards, showing what is within these wards with clear text in a large, conveniently spaced-out lettering and colour paths for people to follow. This shows how sometimes little information but with a clear meaning can be more helpful than other designs. However, the second image shows a good example of what too much information can look like. This signage has very little colour coding, a large amount of information and can be very unclear to read. In this case, if someone appeared stressed, not knowing where to go in an emergency this can delay time in getting the correct patient care due to information not being given out clearly and efficiently. As well as improving patient care the correct wayfinding system designs could also improve the physical and mental wellbeing of healthcare workers. Being able to find where they are needed quickly can determine less stress for those who are already working stressful jobs.

Another study that's been researched within this essay that benefits the importance of graphic design in wayfinding is an article based in China researching how designers can create better wayfinding design in hospitals. This was due to elderly people in China finding it hard to understand texts in signs and they wanted to create easily understood symbols for them to follow. They did a lot of research and actually studied what older people were saying to include in these symbols over a period of time. They believed this would help a lot

of the elderly population as these types of wayfinding techniques were used a lot in China and throughout the world for different reasons.

For example, symbols and icons used for transporting, road signs and tourism were very popular and allowing people to understand information if unable to see or understand the writing, so why not use this technique more often in hospitals along with text? This is definitely something that could benefit the healthcare wayfinding designs in the UK as using specific symbols for hospital locations and destinations within the buildings could force people to understand where they are and where they are going within an hospital, therefore getting a quicker access to care, creating a less anxious time for visitors and a decrease in stress for healthcare workers. Here are some examples of what is meant by using symbols for wayfinding a long with straightforward text and information within these signs.



As you can see through this type of wayfinding symbol design this can shorten the amount of time a person's brain may process the information as it is announced through visual icons. For example, someone rushing to a surgical department could see the icon for it and the text and quickly process that's where they need to go as many people understand images more to text and can read the visual information better. In this case it was made to help elderly people in China who had struggles seeing text from a distance, so this symbol method was very efficient. This can also allow staff working to understand wayfinding better and quicker to reduce stress in their jobs and have more of a clear mind to do their job and save lives. **(Wu, et al., 2022)**

This last chapter of this essay will contain research and evidence to how packaging designs can save lives. Packaging design goes beyond aesthetic and branding, it is a critical role in ensuring safety, functionality and health and wellbeing. This may be through healthcare, food safety and innovative packaging. Although this essay could research into medicine packaging and all things in the healthcare industry, lets dig a bit deeper into how different packaging designs can save lives through the use of environmentally friendly approaches. Over the past few years there have been many cases brought into light on how we as a population are damaging our planet and there are hundreds of campaigns and adverts that express the danger we oppose on the earth. Due to climate change increasing there are several ways the planet is deteriorating whether that's ice sheets melting, an increase in temperature in the earth, oceans getting warmer and levels rising or extreme environmental events occurring such as floods and fires. Since 1993 to 2019 Antarctica has lost up to 148 million tons of ice per year. **(NASA, 2024)**

Perhaps if graphic designers and product designers worked together on innovative package designs to potentially help keep up the health of our planet this could overall save lives due the many health risk factors increasing like strokes, pulmonary diseases, lung and bronchus cancers and aggravated asthma due to things such as air pollution and the poor state of our environment. **(Agency, 2024).**

The overall packaging itself does affect the planet more so than the packaging design due to the materials they use however, graphic designers could reduce the purchasing of plastic packaging through clever designs and objectives. Many articles that have spoken on this

matter believe that innovative sustainable food packaging can address food waste and the long-term effects of 'persistent plastic waste'. **(Valérie Guillard, 2018)**

Similarly, many people have expressed their opinion on package designs having similar warning information to cigarette packaging for meat products. This is due to the meat industry enhancing 'climate disaster' so warning labels would give strong messages to consumers on products and help reduce climate change a lot. So, what if packaging designs showed warning signs for many other problems within climate change like the use of plastic? Could this change consumers mind on purchases and redirect them to products and packaging that don't cause as much harm to the planet? This is where graphic designers and creating new ways of packaging could not only save the planet but in the long term save lives as well due to these increasing health risks from climate change, air pollution and natural disasters. **(Parker, 2024)**

Another reason to why graphic design can save lives through packaging could also be from the campaigns introducing new packaging designs that raise awareness for cancer. Over the past few months there have a lot of everyday, popular items and brand changing their packaging to the colour pink to support Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Not only does this clever way of promotion and packaging design raise money for important charities it can also save lives. Throughout the years there have been many different ways charities have tried to raise awareness about cancer itself, checking your own body for signs or even remembering to make that doctors appointment. This type of attention-grabbing advertisement through packaging design can remind people doing their everyday activities like shopping in Asda a great reminder of these types of health risks to potentially save lives of people, including those people with cancer achieving better healthcare and research due to the money that has been raised for these charities. Overall, this could improve healthcare due to people getting check-ups and appointments sooner rather than later to catch any illness as soon as possible to reduce the risk of long-term illnesses. Here is an example of the popular household items such as 'Heinz' and Warburtons' raising awareness throughout Breast Cancer Month. **(Trader, 2024)**



To conclude, graphic design is a significant tool for saving lives and improving healthcare in the UK by enhancing communication through public campaigns, wayfinding systems, and package design. Its capacity to condense complicated information into clear, understandable graphics ensures that vital health messages are efficiently communicated to a varied audience. Public health initiatives, for example, use effective graphic design to promote awareness about critical concerns including giving up smoking, mental health support, vaccinations, and disease prevention. These commercials combine eye-catching graphics, strong typography, and culturally relevant designs to engage individuals emotionally and intellectually, resulting in beneficial behavioural changes that can save lives. Wayfinding systems in hospitals and healthcare organisations are another crucial use of graphic design. These solutions let patients and visitors navigate complicated situations with clarity and comfort, reducing confusion and stress. Clear signs, understandable symbols, and intelligent colour coding help individuals make their way to appointments, emergency rooms, and specialist departments quickly and effectively. This not only improves the patient experience, but also increases healthcare professionals' operational efficiency by decreasing delays and misdirection. In an emergency, good wayfinding can make the difference between prompt care and avoidable difficulties, emphasizing its life-saving potential. Finally, product packaging design can be used efficiently to raise awareness on illnesses, warn people about the use of products such as medicine and smoking and also reaches wide audiences to express vital matters in health. Packaging design is a strong tool that goes beyond aesthetics and immediately contributes to saving lives and promoting well-being.

Innovative and sustainable packaging can help minimize environmental harm while also preventing health hazards associated with climate change and pollution. Furthermore, effective designs promote awareness about crucial health conditions, such as cancer, by encouraging early identification and supporting fundraising efforts. Campaigns such as Breast Cancer Awareness Month demonstrate how packaging may affect behaviour and promote healthier choices. Packaging design displays its ability to build a safer, better future for people and the earth by tackling both environmental and health issues. Overall, this essay does conclude in the many ways graphic design can save lives and help encourage better health and wellbeing throughout the population. For example, reducing climate change through packaging design can help reduce illnesses created from this topic, while wayfinding can save time and create an efficient workplace for healthcare workers to reduce stress and eventually save more lives. Campaigns can also raise awareness into health checks and purposely encourages in people keeping an eye on their health to catch illnesses early to improve patient care and save lives due to these preventative measures.

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