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Design space: Portable wall divider

By Clare Dowdy



Product: KwickScreen for KwickScreen

Design: in-house

Territory: UK, Europe, Middle East and US

National Health Service hospitals are fined £250 every time male and female patients are put in the same ward. Fines of about £150,000 are recorded for such breaches every month.

But the alternatives – leaving spare beds empty or having builders construct partition walls – are also costly.

Simple room dividers and curtain-based systems do not comply with regulations. So Royal College of Art student Michael Korn came up with a solution in collaboration with NHS staff and then formed a company to produce and sell it.

KwickScreen is a retractable room divider contained within a vertical column that takes up little storage room and is light enough to be wheeled around by just one nurse. This is because the screen's frame is made of an innovative glass fibre composite, which allows it to be extended and folded to form corners – similar to a retractable tape measure. A polyester panel forms the screen. It is fixed to the frame with zips to make it easy to change.

When fully extended, it forms a rigid wall 2 metres high and 3.4 metres wide. About 400 of the dividers, which are priced at £1,475 each, have been sold since the company launched in 2009.

Of those, 250 were sold specifically for segregating male and female patients in wards. According to independent analysis by the NHS, these pay for themselves after two months.

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