

# Reducing unnecessary couch roll in the interests of sustainability and planetary health

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## Introduction

Like most other acute hospital Trusts within the UK, this acute tertiary hospital Trust currently uses couch roll as a barrier between patients and physical examination couches. This often rips, tears or splits whilst the patient is laying on the couch and doesn't serve a purpose. The use of couch roll equates to a minimum procurement spend of £100K per annum and 41 tons of waste a year costing around £12K. Couch roll has been used historically across the NHS, maybe giving a false sense of security for preventing transmission of organisms from the patient to the couch and vice versa. Use of paper roll is a linear economy model with direct effects on sustainability, planetary and public health.



## Methods

The clinical procurement lead for sustainability and Senior Matron for IPC worked together to develop an information poster. Coincidentally, the outpatient's department (OPD) at one of the acute hospitals wanted to reduce paper roll used on couches. The OPD team edited the poster and started a trial to remove the paper roll. OPD decided to trial smaller pieces of couch roll as modesty covers and incontinence pads to be used if there was risk of body fluids. OPD are monitoring this project via Universities Hospitals Sussex patient first methodologies. Patient and staff feedback will be obtained to pave the way forwards.

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## Results

During April 2024, the outpatient department used 111 couch rolls. Following implementation of the couch roll poster and introducing the concept at meetings, this reduced to 65 couch rolls during July 2024. This equates to a 41% reduction.

## Conclusions

The project is in its early stages and not yet complete, however, the trial has been very successful in one outpatient department. This is likely due to engaged leadership and staff wanting to be more sustainable. We hope to reduce use of couch roll by at least 50% across the Trust, saving £50k and 170 trees a year. This will be evaluated every three months

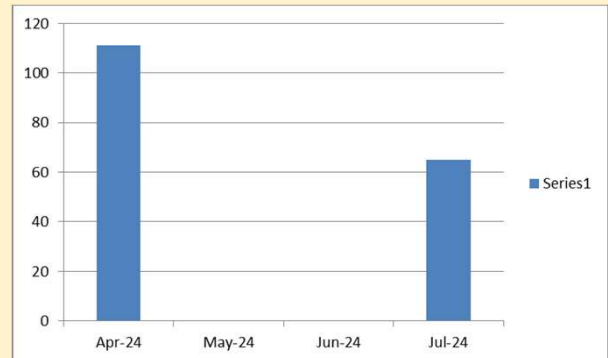


Figure 1 – A bar chart showing reduction in numbers of procured couch rolls for April 2024 and July 2024 following interventions