

# PRoF Award abstract – Call 2016

## <Project acronym and name>

### 1. Research Outline

Acronym	
Project name in English	INGA Wellbeing
Pitch (1 sentence)	Attractive, comfortable and functional clothing that enables patients to look and feel 'normal', keep their dignity, and dress themselves even when hooked up to IV lines, drains and monitors.
Executive summary (max. 10 lines)	INGA Wellbeing has revolutionized patient clothing by creating truly attractive, comfortable and functional day- and nightwear which empowers patients to keep their dignity, independence and confidence. Inspired by personal experience of ill health and informed by medical staff and patients, the stylish men's and women's designs look entirely 'normal' and yet have discreet and hygienic popped openings which enable patients to dress themselves even when hooked up to medical equipment and to stay covered for routine examinations. Patients feel equal to their carers and able to move about and socialize. Nurses gain time to focus on other tasks. Future plans include designs for young patients, and incorporating sensors to further reduce the stigma of illness by monitoring vital signs remotely.

## Cause and context of the research

Modern medicine is placing ever greater emphasis on improving the patient experience, recognizing that treating an individual with drugs, surgery and other interventions is not enough, but rather it is important for their healing to take a more holistic approach and listen, see and support the sufferer as an individual.

To this end, we see, for example, more 'wellness centers' integrated within oncology units where restorative and relaxing massages, counseling and advice on make-up and wigs is provided to cancer sufferers. Alternative treatments such as reiki and acupuncture are also actively encouraged to help patients cope with the symptoms of ill-health or the side-effects of treatment. And, popular movements such as the Hellomynameis campaign in the UK reflect the public's desire that patients be shown greater respect by medical staff and afforded the right to know the name of the person that is caring for them.

In the United States, the emphasis on patient experience has even been given such importance that hospitals are being required to get good 'scores' on this key indicator in order to receive their full MediCare reimbursement. In this context, hospitals have hired former hotel managers to improve their 'hospitality services' such as catering, decoration, laundry facilities, and some have worked with well-known designers such as Diane von Furstenberg and Nicole Miller to overhaul the dreaded hospital gown.

In addition, there is a movement in healthcare towards discharging patients sooner in order that they may go home and continue their treatment there with the assistance of mobile nursing units. This is both a cost-saving measure and thought to be in the patients' best interests as it reduces exposure to germs and viruses that could endanger those with fragile health, and gets them out of the hospital environment, which is thought to have a negative psychological impact on many patients. In familiar surroundings, with ready access to friends and families it is believed that patients will recover more quickly or, at the very least, have a better quality of life. However, in reality, this means that although patients may still be hooked up to medical devices for all or part of the day, they are without round the clock nursing care and thus need to manage more tasks – such as dressing and moving about – by themselves.

It should also be noted that the term 'patient empowerment' is heard more and more in the medical field as the internet has made it possible both for patients to research their condition and treatment with greater ease, but also to find fellow sufferers and form support groups. Emboldened by their improved knowledge and camaraderie, patients are more demanding about the quality of the care they receive and can quickly spread disparaging comments about doctors, nurses and medical institutions through social media. They are becoming a force to be reckoned with and sometimes they are taking things into their own hands, as we see with more attempts being made by former sufferers or their loved ones to develop improved patient clothing that reduces the necessity to bear all for every examination or treatment, keeps people warm, and helps reduce the stigma of ill-health.

## 2. Innovation results achieved

Simply put, INGA Wellbeing clothes give patients dignity, independence and confidence.

*“I felt as if I was in a normal pair of pyjamas. A guy like any other,”* said Venceslau Conceicao Pinto, who had surgery in the Jules Bordet Institute as part of his treatment for pancreatic cancer. *“Infront of the nurses, I felt properly dressed.”*

INGA Wellbeing’s range of men and women’s day- and nightwear is a revolution in patient clothing as it has achieved a true merging of functionality with style, boosting individuals’ self-esteem and reminding medical staff that they are ‘more than a patient; a person’.

Thanks to the talents of internationally successful fashion designer Fiona Mc Greal, these clothes look deceptively normal, and yet they are suitable for ALL health conditions and stages of illness. As such, patients suffering from cancer or with a renal disease, or those with a cardiac condition or gastro complaint, or who require rehabilitation after a stroke or need palliative care can all benefit from these truly attractive, comfortable and functional clothes.



Intended for use once the patient no longer needs the hospital gown but is still hooked up to too many medical devices to be able to wear ‘home’ clothes without difficulty, the INGA Wellbeing range of tops, dresses, trousers, nightdresses, pyjamas and dressing gowns enable most patients to dress and undress themselves without requiring the assistance of nurses.



This is achieved thanks to the cuff-to-collar popped sleeve design, and as such patients can decide for themselves when they want to have a shower, or get ready for bed and do not need to wait for busy nurses to have time to help them or stand naked in front of these caring strangers as IV bags are passed through tight sleeves etc.

It also means that valuable time is returned to medical staff, as less time is spent easing patients into awkward clothing and trying to work around inappropriate clothing to carry out routine examinations and treatment. Pinto again:

*“The nurses were really pleased with (the pyjamas) too as it made it easier for them to carry out their work.”*

Typically patients are asked to disrobe, pull down their trousers, bear their breast, or put up with the discomfort of having a hand stuck awkwardly down a tight neckline, but with INGA Wellbeing clothes, these indignities and discomfort are significantly reduced.

*“INGA Wellbeing clothing enables medical staff to examine, and even treat, patients easily and without having to fully undress them, both maintaining patient dignity and comfort and saving valuable nursing time,”* said Jacques Peeters, medical technical department head nurse and specialist in ergonomotricity at the Jules Bordet Institute.



Discreet openings to the arms, back, chest, stomach, groin and legs enable patients to stay covered for most routine examinations and treatments. In addition, patients are more comfortable as drains, IVs, catheters, or monitors are correctly positioned by being passed through an opening, secured in place instead of revealing too much or pulling painfully.

Indeed, thanks to an innovative double-sided pocket design, patients are able to carry small drains securely and discreetly, and thus move around more easily and without embarrassment. Since the drain can be viewed in the pocket from the outside, the patient is not required to undress in order for a nurse to check whether it is time to empty the drain and the nursing staff can more quickly move on to other important tasks.

Made in natural, soft and stretchy fabrics, the clothes help to control body temperature and odour and are pleasant to wear as they do not irritate the skin or restrict movement. In addition, they can accommodate inevitable changes in body shape caused by many medical treatments.

*“I think that the cut of the nightdress is very pretty,”* said Marie, a patient that had back surgery in St. Luc in January. *“Even I, despite not being the size of a fashion model, found the design very flattering. The fabric was very comfortable.”*

INGA Wellbeing intends to sell these clothes direct to patients via an online shop [www.ingawellbeing.com](http://www.ingawellbeing.com). In addition, we are in discussions with hospitals, laundry services and medical insurance providers to offer the option of leasing these garments for the time

that individuals need them. Our hope is that in so doing patients will have access to the clothes at the time that they can most benefit from them at a very reasonable price. We also plan to adapt our solutions to designs that are suitable for teenagers, children and babies.

Furthermore, INGA Wellbeing is part of a European consortium known as SMARTpro, which is looking at ways to embed sensors into clothing for patients. This innovation will allow patients' vital signs to be monitored discreetly and remotely thereby further reducing the stigma of ill health. Prototypes are currently in the design stage.

Currently, INGA Wellbeing is in the proof of concept stage, with several trials of its prototype nightwear solutions underway in Belgian hospitals (including Cliniques Universitaires de St. Luc and Saint-Michel, part of the Cliniques de l'Europe group). An early market test is being prepared at this moment with an e-shop ([www.ingawellbeing.com](http://www.ingawellbeing.com)) developed to showcase the full collection and gauge what price the market will bear. With the results of the functionality tests and the market's reaction in hand, the INGA Wellbeing team will confirm its strategy ready for a full-market launch in September 2016.

### 3. Link to the PRoF values

**Comfort** – INGA Wellbeing patient clothing are all about providing maximum comfort to patients. The designs reduce snagging and pulling from IV lines and drains, and the choice of natural fabric helps with body temperature control and odour. Soft to the touch, with a flattering amount of stretch around the body, the clothes are light and pleasant to wear. Furthermore, routine examinations and treatments by doctors and nurses no longer require clothing to be pulled aside to gain access, but rather more simply un-poppered.

*"INGA clothing enables medical staff to examine, and even treat, patients easily and without having to fully undress them, both maintaining patient dignity and comfort and saving valuable nursing time,"* Jacques Peeters, Medical technical department head nurse and specialist in ergonomics, Jules Bordet Institute, Belgium

**Privacy** – Ensuring patient dignity was a primary focus of the INGA Wellbeing team and great care has been taken to ensure that individuals do not have to reveal more than is absolutely necessary for routine examinations and treatments. By providing discreet access to the arms, chest, back, stomach, groin and legs, the clothes can accommodate medical devices without snagging. In addition, most patients will find that they can dress and undress themselves and no longer need to be naked in front of nurses while they help them pass bags and lines through tight sleeves etc.

*"We think that being able to look 'normal', dress and undress independently plays an important part in patients' recovery. INGA's concept is therefore very interesting."*

Dr. Sophie Cvilic, Head of radiotherapy, Breast Clinic, Cliniques St. Jean, Brussels

**Security** – We are already working on incorporating sensors into the fabric used to make INGA Wellbeing clothing so that patients' vital signs and movement can be discreetly monitored without distressing them or drawing attention to their condition. This might be particularly useful in order to know the whereabouts of an Alzheimer patient who often wanders off but who finds a GPS monitoring bracelet too invasive. The security and wellbeing of such patients, as well as those with whom they interact, would be greatly enhanced in this way.

*“Working hand in hand with INGA Wellbeing we hope to be able to develop clothing that patients will be comfortable wearing and which will improve their quality of life by discreetly monitoring their health and helping to keep them safe by alerting carers to unexpected changes in their condition or whereabouts,”* Marc Croes, consultant hygiene and medical at Belgian textiles research center Centexbel, a founder of the SMARTpro project.

**Anti-loneliness** – The issue of isolation and institutionalisation of patients is well-recognised. A contributing factor is often said to be what they wear. If a patient is dressed in a revealing hospital gown with an unattractive institutional print, or have had to compromise style for efficiency in dressing for the realities of their treatment, they may prefer not to have visitors as they are embarrassed about the way they look and feel less than themselves. INGA Wellbeing patient clothing looks entirely normal. Dressed in an attractive nightdress that doubles as a daydress, or with a dressing gown that has the look of a daycoat, patients feel confident, well dressed and prepared to receive visitors or leave their ward and get a change of scene.

*These innovative, yet normal looking, garments should help patients to regain their independence more quickly as they are empowered to dress themselves, move about and socialise, which in turn should promote a speedier recovery.”* Jacques Peeters, Medical technical department head nurse and specialist in ergonomics, Jules Bordet Institute, Belgium

**Non-stigmatising solutions** – Wearing INGA Wellbeing clothes, the patient, medical staff and their loved ones, 'see' the person, rather than their condition. The stigma of ill-health is instantly eradicated.

*“There is a great need for ways to help patients to be seen and treated as people, not as patients. I think that INGA would go a long way to helping empower patients and their loved ones to retain their sense of femininity and individuality.”*

Rosa Meza, MacMillan Information Centre Supervisor, Harley Street Clinic, London

**Inter-generational** – INGA Wellbeing's clothes are suitable for all ages from young adults through to the elderly. They are elegant and stylish without being a slave to current fashion trends. In the future, we intend to adapt our technical knowledge to create clothing appropriate for younger patients – teenagers, children and even babies.

*“INGA Wellbeing has developed a range of clothing that works just as well for the young body form as for the aging body shape and, as such, would be of interest to both young,*

*middle-aged and elderly patients,”* Joris Cools, researcher fashion technology at University College Gent, which hosts European project into clothing innovation for the elderly D-Dag.

**Respect** – This is precisely what INGA Wellbeing is all about. It is the motivation behind the entire concept. As our tagline “more than a patient; a person” makes clear, we seek to ensure the individual and not their condition is front and centre. That they are able to wear clothes that are respectful of their needs and their individuality, and encourage others to treat them with the respect that they deserve.

*“At Qualivity we believe it is important to be able to offer solutions to our patients that are in accordance with our values of quality, respect and attention to the individual. In light of this focus on ensuring a good quality of life at each stage of illness, Qualivity was delighted to learn about INGA’s fantastic concept, which places the emphasis on the ‘person’.* Loic Malluquin, CEO of Belgian home nursing care provider Qualivity Soins, which prides itself on ensuring patients are treated respectfully as individuals.

**Flexibility** – We have intentionally created INGA Wellbeing patient clothing to be appropriate for all medical conditions. Each garment is flexible enough to be useful to all patients no matter their illness or its progression. An individual can purchase an INGA Wellbeing item of clothing and be confident that it will see them through their medical treatment, no matter what drains or lines are inserted, what dressings applied or how they lose or gain weight.

*“The Mimi Foundation and INGA Wellbeing share the same aims: to help patients preserve their self-esteem, their courage and their strength. The INGA range of clothing is elegant, attractive and very practical and will improve patients’ quality of life during treatment.”* Cécile Van Parijs, managing director of the Mimi Foundation, a European cancer patient support charity headquartered in Belgium.

## 4. Applicable IPR rules

We have been advised that it is not possible to patent or copyright clothing designs. However, we have trademarked our logo and name.

## 5. Information on the partners

INGA Wellbeing has been created by three women: former journalist and diplomat Nikla Lancksweert, PR executive Claire Robinson, and fashion designer Fiona Mc Greal.

Having experienced ill-health themselves, either as patients or caring for loved ones during long hospitalisations, they were determined to improve patient dignity and comfort by creating entirely normal-looking yet functional clothing. Having worked together for three years, investing their own resources and building a wealth of contacts and goodwill, the three co-founders are delighted to see their vision becoming reality and having the positive impact on patient experience that they had hoped for.



INGA Wellbeing has developed its prototypes with the assistance of two highly respected Belgian clothing manufacturers – Alsico, a global producer of workwear including uniforms for care professionals, and Gysemans Clothing Industry, a producer of high-end designer clothing. It has been supported and guided by both ICHEC and Solvay business schools and has received a bourse de preactivite from the Economic ministry of Wallonia. In addition, it has benefited from the advice of the Innovatie Centrum and the Flanders Fashion Institute.

Note:

If your project is selected as laureate for the Award Symposium, a powerpoint presentation that reflects the project as suggested will be required (in advance), including a future plan how the funding will be used.

If your project is selected as the winner of the Award, you will be invited to present the results achieved thanks to the award during the Award Symposium of the next year.



## **Addendum: Contact information**

**Nikla Lancksweert**

Welriekendedreef 151,  
3090 Overijse  
0485 478 818  
[Nikla@ingawellbeing.com](mailto:Nikla@ingawellbeing.com)

**Claire Robinson**

Dorpelstraat 20,  
Everberg  
0474 04 67 89  
[Claire@ingawellbeing.com](mailto:Claire@ingawellbeing.com)

**Fiona Mc Greal**

Langelostraat 115  
3212 Pellenberg  
0476 44 70 34  
[Fiona@ingawellbeing.com](mailto:Fiona@ingawellbeing.com)