

‘Jellow’ - A happiness device for the Cerebral Palsy

Industrial Design Centre(IDC), Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, Mumbai, India



User group characteristics and problem identification

Jellow addresses those affected by cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy, which is often misunderstood as a disability or a disease pertaining to brain efficiency, is a medical condition involving motor sensory coordination or the lack of it, affecting the control of the muscles and leading to muscle impairment.

This affects (among other functions) the speech and writing abilities of the cerebral palsy and prevents him/her from communicating with others.

Inability to communicate could, in turn, lead to isolation outside of their special school support structure, distance them from the mainstream world and set in frustration amongst the cerebral palsy.

Proposed solution

Jellow – its interface and interaction

Jellow is an attempt to bridge the gap in communication between those affected by cerebral palsy and those not.

The focus of the problem has been on facilitating communication in the emotional domain since this remains a completely unaddressed area. It is possible that some of the ensuing product functions will additionally facilitate communication problems in the physical domain, as well as be physically therapeutic for the cerebral palsy child in the manner of a comfort blanket.

The basis of the product is an Emotional Language Protocol (elp) that works as its interface and is driven by four concurrently acting features - color, shape, motion and sound - corresponding to the sensory modes of the visual, the tactile and the aural. The interaction itself is facilitated by touch of varying intensities including pressing, thumping, squeezing, turning and, of course, by touching. Those not affected by cerebral palsy may additionally use speech along with touch.

The interplay of this interface and interaction allows the cerebral palsy child to express his different needs and emotions to another person – cerebral palsy or otherwise. Also, Jellow's mobile connectivity allows its users to communicate with someone far away.



Jellow – its product form

The product form draws its inspiration from the lotus flower, which has the ability to bloom in the murkiest of water and yet remain untainted. The metaphor was meant to apply to the way cerebral palsy children have to unfairly carry the stigma of being mentally impaired. Jellow works primarily on their ability to think and thereby allows them to stay above this perceived stigma and establish to the world outside that they could be as 'normal' as the others if not better.

Lotus is also the national flower of India where this product has been conceived.

Jellow – future possibilities

Jellow is the start of an emotional language protocol that has the potential for customization and upgradation to suit the adult cerebral palsy in future. In a limited but new way, the idea was to open up the otherwise different worlds of those affected and those not affected by cerebral palsy. And bring them together into closer emotional contact with each another.

Core team: Anchal Kumar, Samraat Sardesai, Peter Joseph, Antara Hazarika and Preeti Thankar

Support team: Sherline Pimenta, Rashmin Raj, Pudi Ravi Krishna, Ram Brijesh, Pranav Mistry, Khairnar, Kini, Patil and Singh

Supervisors: Prof. Ravi Poovaiah and Dr. Ajanta Sen

Co-ordinators: S. Joy Mountford, Lili Cheng, Laurie Verteley and Susan Yee