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## Media Release

### **RUH Goes for Gold in caring for Patients with Dementia**

A new scheme is being launched today (8th July) by the RUH to help improve the care of people with dementia during their stay in hospital.

The Charter Mark Standards for RUH Patients with Dementia is the first such scheme in the UK and will provide a 'gold standard' for staff to ensure care for people with dementia on all adult wards, not just those specifically for older people, is the very best it can be.

There are about 750,000 people in the UK with dementia and at any one time, up to a third of all patients in hospital may have dementia or delirium. Whilst these patients may have been admitted to the RUH for other reasons, their dementia can make time spent in an unfamiliar hospital bed even more distressing.

Dr Chris Dyer, Consultant Geriatrician says "People with dementia may feel sad, frightened or angry about what is happening to them, and a decline in their ability to talk, read and write can make it hard to understand medical problems or communicate with the staff caring for them.

"We've been working with Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and voluntary organisations such as Alzheimer's Support, and are proud to launch these extremely important Charter Mark Standards for RUH Patients with Dementia. The high standards are set for each adult ward to ultimately provide the very best care possible for patients with dementia and ensure their stay in our hospital is as stress-free as possible."

Each ward is being given the opportunity to apply for the Charter Mark, with three levels available - gold, silver and bronze. The standards cover four main areas of care: respecting and caring for people with dementia, the ward environment, meeting nutritional needs and suitability of staffing.

Within each of these areas there are then further markers of 'excellent care'. These include ensuring that care is person-centred and that feedback from patients and their carers show a high level of satisfaction. To be awarded the gold standard Charter Mark, signs on the wards must be easily understandable for people with dementia and every effort must be taken to prevent boredom by regular therapeutic sessions or activities.

Mealtimes are so important to get right, for both a patient's immediate care and their longer term well-being, but patients with dementia can struggle at mealtimes. Dr Dyer agrees, "We want all staff to recognise that patients with dementia may not feel thirst or hunger and that some patients may take a long time to eat a meal."

"Carers should be encouraged to visit if they wish to and patients should have the chance to sit at a table more socially if they would like. We want more flexibility in the provision and presentation of food, with snacks and finger foods offered 24 hours a day to make it easier for patients with dementia to keep their independence and still maintain their weight."

In order to apply for the Charter Mark, each ward manger sends a written application before taking part in a preliminary informal review. A formal review then takes place involving patient representatives followed by an observation period to really see work in practice on the ward.

Dr Dyer adds "We hope all wards will take on the Charter Mark challenge and work on each of the areas so we can bring our care of all dementia patients up to the gold standard."

**ENDS**