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Media Release

RUH requests return of walking aids

The Royal United Hospital is asking patients to help them save money by returning any crutches, walking frames or walking sticks that are no longer required – or incur a fine which will come into force from August.

It costs the RUH in the region of £37,000 a year to supply walking aids to patients. Over 3,000 crutches, walking frames and sticks have been supplied during the last year and many of them are not returned.

From 1 August 2012, we will introduce a £35 fine, in the hope that this will help people to be more responsible about returning hospital property that has been loaned to them.

Andrew Ross, a Physiotherapist at the RUH says: “Physiotherapy supply the emergency and orthopaedic departments with crutches and frames and these are loaned to patients for a short time. Some are returned but we know that many are not, which is why we end up having to purchase £37k of walking aids each year.

“If you borrow a book from a public library, you’d be expected to return it – it’s the same principle for the hospital.

“We will be asking patients to sign for the loan of walking aids, which asks them to be returned within a 12 week period, unless they are required for long-term use, in which case, we’ll record that requirement. If the walking aids are not returned within that time, an invoice will be issued for £35, which will cover the costs incurred in replacing them as well as administration costs.

“The crutches cost around £20 a pair and around £26 for a walking frame. By returning them, people will be helping the Trust to save quite a lot of money. It’s a significant sum which could effectively be used to employ a senior nurse or a senior physiotherapist for a year.”

In the meantime, the Hospital is calling a walking aids amnesty prior to August. If anyone does have any crutches, walking frames or walking sticks they no longer require, they won’t be liable for a fine and they can return them to the reception area in the Physiotherapy Department (not the Emergency Department), any time between 9.00am and 4.00pm.

Ends