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Media Release

Raising awareness of dementia

The Royal United Hospital is backing a national campaign to raise awareness of dementia amongst NHS staff, to help improve the service provided to patients with this condition.

One in three people over the age of 65 will develop dementia, and health and social care professionals have a key role to play in helping improve people with dementia's quality of life.

Consultant Geriatrician, Dr Chris Dyer, who is the lead for older people's care at the RUH said: "We all need to be more aware of what we can do to help patients with dementia, not least because they often feel vulnerable and in need of extra reassurance and support.

"There is a lot of work going on nationally about dementia with doctors and nurses, so this campaign is targeting a different, but very important group of hospital staff - porters, receptionists, volunteers and cleaners whose attitude can make a tremendous difference.

"We want to raise their awareness of dementia and encourage them to take specific action. For example, if they see a patient looking lost, check they are okay and whether they need help. In particular, we are stressing the need to be very kind and patient and remember the person."

About a quarter of all hospital beds are occupied with patients who have dementia, most of whom are over the age of 65.

Hospital staff are being encouraged to be aware of the condition and how they can help by:

- Never talking down to a patient or over their head as if they are not there.
- Avoid criticising and don't let any impatience show.
- Look for the meaning behind the words, even if they don't seem to make much sense. The person is usually trying to communicate what they feel.
- Imagine how you would like to be spoken to if you were in their position.

Photographs of patients and staff on the wards, which were taken by the RUH, appear in the national campaign material, which has been run by the national NHS Campaigns Group.

Ends



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