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Media Release

New Acute Oncology Service

Further improvements in outcomes for cancer patients across Bath and North East Somerset, Wiltshire and Somerset are expected following the launch of a specialist acute oncology service at the RUH.

The Acute Oncology Service will play a critical role in managing urgent care when a cancer patient needs it. The new service has been possible through the appointment of two new Consultant Oncologists and a team of Specialist Nurses, to provide rapid, high quality, expert care for cancer patients, working alongside colleagues in the Emergency Department, General Medicine and Surgery.

The new service consists of a Senior Cancer Nurse and a Consultant Oncologist who are available between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday, providing specialist advice and support to both teams within the hospital and GPs across the region. Outside of these hours the Consultant Oncologist provides specialist advice and works alongside the existing medical teams.

Dr Louise Medley, Consultant Medical Oncologist at the RUH, says: "This service will improve outcomes for cancer patients requiring urgent care as rapid specialist review can prevent the onset, or quickly manage serious complications, improve a person's experience of care, reduce the need for emergency admissions, and shorten patients' hospital stay.

"The Acute Oncology Service is not a new way of referring patients to our cancer services; that hasn't changed, all patients with a suspected cancer referred by their GP will be seen within two weeks. This is an additional service that helps to make sure emergency cancer patients receive the quickest and most appropriate treatment when they are in crisis, with access to specialist support and reassurance."

One patient who has benefited from getting specialist oncology advice via the Acute Oncology Service is Mrs Wendy Fletcher from Dunkerton. Whilst having a routine blood test, Wendy told the Phlebotomist about her swollen leg who notified staff in outpatients. Wendy was fast-tracked into a clinic to be seen by a consultant, tests were done and Wendy was diagnosed with a deep vein thrombosis, and received treatment straightaway. Normally a patient would have to return to the Medical Assessment Unit and wait for a scan which all takes time. Wendy said: "I'm really grateful that I was seen and treated quickly without the need to stay in hospital. It made me feel safe and well cared for."

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Dr Medley adds: "In one week, 17 new patients were referred to the new acute oncology service, and our input directly affected length of stay for 14 of those patients. In fact it avoided admission to hospital altogether for two of them."

"Staff have been very positive and enthusiastic about the new service, and there's a strong feeling that patients will benefit hugely, which is fantastic."

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