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RUH delivering safest care possible

The Royal United Hospital Bath's Medical Director says the public can be assured that the hospital is delivering the safest patient care possible.

Dr Tim Craft said there were absolutely no concerns about mortality rates at the RUH, after 11 hospital Trusts with above average death rates were put into special measures, following the publication of a review by Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, NHS England's medical director.

The Keogh Review used two different death rate measures - deaths after hospital treatment and up to 30 days after discharge (the Summary Hospital-Level Mortality Indicator, or SHMI) and death in hospital (the Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratio, or HSMR) to compare hospitals across the country.

The national average HSMR is 100, and the RUH is currently at 97, which means we are below the national average and therefore performing in line with expectations for a hospital our size. Similarly, our mortality measure using SHMI is and always has been better than the national average.

Dr Craft said: "We monitor mortality rates extremely carefully. Every month I call a meeting of senior doctors and nurses to look at our performance. We take data from Dr Foster and other national sources so that we can compare how well we are doing. Of course, everything we do in healthcare, from prescribing a simple pill to undertaking complex surgery, carries some risk for our patients. It's important for us to ensure we are managing these risks well and making sure we offer our patients the safest possible treatment.

"Everyone who works at the RUH is proud of the safety record of the hospital and our patients should be reassured by what the figures are telling us."

The RUH was recently praised by the Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, who in a speech given at UCLH in London, said: "...in individual Trusts, there have been some even more spectacular successes. Like at the Royal United Hospital Bath where, through a structured programme of safety, they have halved adverse events in the last two years."

The Keogh Review also criticised staffing levels at some hospitals. We monitor our nursing levels very closely and take proactive measures to recruit, such as an open day in June when we recruited to all our registered nursing and health care assistant vacancies. We have benchmarked the RUH against other Trusts and believe that we have a higher number of doctors than other Trusts of our size.

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