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Media Release

Could your photographs comfort a patient with dementia?

Could your photographs of Bath, Wiltshire and Somerset find a new lease of life at Royal United Hospital Bath?

Local residents and keen photographers are being asked to send in iconic images of the local area as part of wider moves to enhance the healing environment at RUH Bath.

The imagery will be used to compile a series of picture boards that will help patients feel more at home when its Combe Ward re-opens this October. The ward is undergoing 10 weeks of refurbishment work to create an all-new feel designed with the dementia patient in mind.

Ward Manager Jonathan Willis and his colleagues are looking for images of iconic locations, such as the Royal Crescent or Glastonbury Tor, from across the areas served by RUH. These will then be displayed for patients, especially those with dementia, who are known to take comfort from fond memories of places relevant to their own backgrounds.

The photographs will be reproduced and laminated so that they can be moved between boards easily to create a montage that is tailored to individual patients, and will help them identify which ward area belongs to them.

All images received will be stored on file for use with future patients as part of a wider programme to enhance the care experience for people with dementia and their carers across the areas served by the RUH.

Mr Willis said: "For a person living with dementia, being admitted to hospital can be an unsettling experience, but being reminded of familiar locations and experiences can provide



real comfort. Once open the new Combe Ward will not only provide acutely ill patients, patients with dementia and their carers with the right practical environment, but an appropriate level of emotional support, too.

“We know from experience how vital physical surroundings can be to the wellbeing of people with dementia, but also the importance of reminding them of familiar places holds within this context.

“That’s why we’re calling on local communities in the areas of Bath, Somerset and Wiltshire to share their iconic photographs of past events and local landmarks with us for the benefit of others.”

The new Combe Ward facility will have 26 beds, including six side rooms that, once complete, will complement wider operational improvements already introduced at RUH to raise overall standards in dementia care further.

These include the recruitment of three new dementia co-ordinators who are now working across all wards and in-patient facilities as part of a project unique to the RUH.

The co-ordinators are thought to be the first of their kind in the UK. A new seven-day a week mental health service also aims to work proactively with carers, and help reduce hospital stay times and readmission figures.

Patients on the new Combe Ward will also benefit from nursing stations in each bay for improved observation, clear signage and sensitive lighting to help avoid confusion in an environment furnished to feel more like home than a hospital ward.

A living area complete with fireplace and wood-effect flooring throughout will also help patients and their carers feel at ease during their stay when the new ward re-opens in October 2013. Photographers, artists and members of the public wishing to supply images of Bath, Somerset and Wiltshire for use on Combe Ward can email them to RUHcommunications@nhs.net

Ends

For information contact Anna Milewski or Jess Childs at Working Word on 02920 646840 or email anna.milewski@workingword.co.uk or email jess.childs@workingword.co.uk