

Date: 8 March 2016

Communications Department
Tel: 01225 82 6282

Media Release

RUHcommunications@nhs.net
www.ruh.nhs.uk

LUPUS UK Centre of Excellence accolade for RNHRD

The charity and patient group LUPUS UK has named The Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases, as a LUPUS UK Centre of Excellence in recognition of the Bath based hospital's multi-disciplinary approach to diagnosis, treatment and management of this condition.

The RNHRD, part of the Royal United Hospital, is one of only five centres in the UK to achieve this accolade. A plaque marking the announcement was unveiled by local celebrity Dr Phil Hammond on Tuesday 1 March.

Lupus is a life-threatening illness of the immune system, where the body's defence mechanism begins to attack itself, leading to inflammation and damage in many different parts of the body. Worldwide, lupus is more common than leukaemia, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis but the disease is often very difficult to diagnose. With its many possible symptoms which can vary widely and come and go unpredictably, identifying lupus can be very difficult and most people may have experienced years of uncertainty before their diagnosis

Sue Brown, Consultant Nurse and member of the Connective Tissue Disease (CTD) service at the RNHRD. has been a cornerstone of the Trust's clinical service for lupus patients, Sue says:

"We're really pleased that the RNHRD has been awarded this prestigious recognition. Our focus is always on what is best for each individual patient and so our approach is very personalised. Lupus is currently incurable but treatable and manageable, especially if diagnosed early. As well as providing intensive treatment and therapy we offer people with lupus the opportunity to learn new coping skills and techniques which could help them gain more control over symptoms and energy levels.

"Our group education programme also provides a valuable opportunity for those with lupus to meet with others with the same condition; it can feel quite daunting when you are first diagnosed and discussing your feelings, worries and concerns can really help.

"It isn't easy living with lupus – it can take time for medications to take effect and for you to learn how to balance the demands of the illness without it overwhelming you. You have to make adjustments in your life and change some of your activities, but it doesn't mean the end of everything."

Yvonne Norton MBE, Vice-Chair and Trustee, and Honorary life Vice-President of LUPUS UK said: "LUPUS UK is delighted to make the award of LUPUS UK Centre of Excellence to RNHRD. Strong criteria have had to be fulfilled and assessment visits made to the Lupus Unit to ensure that exacting standards set by LUPUS UK have been achieved by Prof Neil McHugh and his team.



“All lupus patients attending the LUPUS UK Centre of Excellence at RNHRD can be assured that they are receiving excellent care from a medical team dedicated to providing the best possible treatment and to enabling the patient to be as well and active as possible.”

The RNHRD together with the University of Bath have a major programme of research into lupus and associated conditions. The Bath team led by Professor McHugh is part of a UK consortium undertaking a £5.1 million Medical Research Council funded study seeking to identify genetic and biological factors that influence how patients with lupus respond to different types of treatment.

ENDS

Photo caption:

Representatives from LUPUS UK: Yvonne Norton MBE, Paul Howard, Peter Norton and Linda Rumbles with Dr Phil Hammond and colleagues from the Lupus Team at the RNHRD: Sister Sue Brown, Dr Ellie Korendowych, CCT Nurse Andrea Dowden, Professor Neil McHugh, Sister Sarah Smith and Dr John Pauling