

Press Release

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New Oral Chemotherapy Clinic Benefits RUH Patients

A groundbreaking oral chemotherapy clinic which has been running for just three months, is already benefiting patients at the Royal United Hospital.

Oncology and haematology pharmacist Vicki Clarke has set up and runs a special oral chemotherapy clinic twice a week. She gives advice to patients on how to take oral chemotherapy preparations and how to manage the side effects. As Vicki has recently qualified as an independent pharmacist prescriber, she can now also prescribe medication for patients in the clinic, instead of them having to be seen by a doctor.

This additional service is freeing up valuable clinic time, which in turn enables doctors to see more patients or patients who require more complex care.

Vicki says: "Many cancer patients come to the hospital for intravenous chemotherapy. They experience side effects as a result of the chemo and they get a lot of support and care from the nurses whilst they are here.

"The patients on oral chemotherapy can experience severe side effects as well; the difference is that they come to the hospital to collect their drugs to take at home. The oral chemotherapy clinic ensures they are supported too and they know who to contact if they experience problems.

"As well reviewing a patient's treatment after a course of chemotherapy, I am now qualified to prescribe for them too. Being able to deal with the more straightforward cases instead of a doctor, has freed up clinic time, so that doctors can concentrate on the complex cases and see them more quickly.

"At the moment I mainly prescribe oral chemotherapy to treat breast and bowel cancer. My role is expanding and I am starting to help in other areas such as intravenous chemotherapy for breast cancer patients and treatment for some haematology patients. I am also able to prescribe medicines to help with side effects of chemotherapy if necessary.

"Since December, when the clinic started, I have reviewed about 30 patients and they have all been really positive about the clinic. When I talk through their treatment, I ask if they are happy for me to prescribe for them too, no-one has ever refused.

“I work really closely with the clinicians and there is always a doctor around in case they are needed. The oncology and haematology consultants have been very supportive of me throughout the Independent Prescribing course and are keen for me to increase my prescribing range.”

Consultant oncologist Dr Ed Gilby says: “Vicki is a first rate pharmacist who has approached this innovative project for cancer chemotherapy with real enthusiasm. She has a very kind way with patients and is very popular. Her skills have allowed shared care, which enables us oncologists to spend a little more time with our patients.”

Head of pharmacy Regina Brophy says: “Pharmacists know a lot about all aspects of medicines and spend many years specialising. I am very proud that Vicki is putting all her skills into practice to benefit patients. Effective teamwork is the key to optimising patient care.”

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