

Press Release

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Annual General Meeting: Review of 2006/07

At 3.00pm, on Wednesday 11 July, the Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Trust (RUH) will hold its annual general meeting. Chairman James Carine, Chief executive James Scott and acting director of finance Jennifer Howells will review the year 2006/07 and report on recent progress and achievements.

Highlights over the past year include:

Breaking even:

For the first time in its 14 year history the RUH broke even and reported a small surplus of £144,000 compared with a deficit of £7.3m in the previous year. This significant milestone was achieved following a successful savings programme of £14.5m which was identified and implemented across all areas of the trust.

During 2006/07 the trust also reduced its management costs as a percentage of the trust's income (from 4.32% in 2005/06 to 4.00% in 2006/07) and improved performance in the payment of suppliers.

Success in meeting key access targets

As well as achieving financial balance the trust continued to make good progress across a range of key national targets. Waiting times were reduced to 20 weeks for nearly all those waiting for their inpatient or day case operations and significant progress was made in reducing cancelled operations. For those waiting for first outpatient appointments times were reduced to eleven weeks. In particular waiting times were drastically reduced for patients needing endoscopy treatment.

All three key access targets for cancer care were met - covering the 14 day referral to appointment target, 31 day treatment time target, and the 62 day target from urgent GP referral for suspected cancer to first treatment. 100% of patients who needed rapid access to chest pain clinics were also seen within the required two weeks.

Tackling hospital infections has been a top priority for the trust. Figures published by the Health Protection Agency show that the RUH is making real improvements but due to the number of cases early in the year the trust missed the overall annual target. Achievements include the implementation of an effective MRSA action programme which the Department of Health asked the trust to share nationally as an example of good practice. Activities included the running of high profile campaigns for staff, patients and visitors to raise awareness of infection control and highlight the importance of good hand hygiene.

Clinical excellence

The RUH continued to do well in the Dr Foster hospital guides. It was rated amongst the best performing hospitals in the UK for safety and quality of care, with expected mortality between 2003 – 2006 reported as 'low'. This means that for the same procedures, the relative risk of dying was low at the RUH in comparison with all other hospitals in the country. The breast unit also performed extremely well in the Dr Foster Breast Cancer Guide 2006. These findings are consistent with other national assessments of RUH care including the CHKS Top 40 Hospitals award, received for a second year running, and a top ten rating again in the intensive care national audit. This national recognition is thanks to the dedicated staff who work hard to provide high quality care to patients.

New expanded services provide more local treatment for cardiac patients

Cardiac services were expanded with the appointment of two further cardiologists and the installation of a second cardiac catheter laboratory, officially opened in 2006 by the Secretary of State Patricia Hewitt. This expansion has increased capacity to diagnose and investigate patients with angina and possible coronary heart disease. The RUH can also now offer a new coronary angioplasty service to local patients who would otherwise have had to travel to Bristol for their treatment.

New state-of-the-art Picture Archiving and Digital Communications System (PACS)

In February the RUH introduced a state-of-the-art Picture and Archiving and Digital Communications System on time and within budget. PACS is the most significant change in medical imaging since the discovery of x-rays and enables images such as x-rays and scans to be stored electronically and viewed on standard computer screens. It is already making a huge contribution to improving and modernising patient care and transforming the way clinicians and staff work both in the RUH and in the wider health community.

New scanning facilities

During the last year, staff worked hard to successfully reduce the times patients have to wait for diagnostic tests. The majority of RUH patients now receive their MRI or CT scan within 13 weeks, with those identified as urgent receiving scans even more quickly.

After a highly successful fund-raising campaign by the Hospital's Forever Friends appeal a second CT scanner was delivered in June of this year and has been installed in a new scanning suite. This new scanner along with an extension to the use of the hospital's second MRI scanner will reduce waiting times to a maximum of four weeks over the next six months.

Listening to our patients

The hospital and its staff aim to put patients at the very heart of everything it does and to involve them in all aspects of their care. Patient feedback helps the hospital to review and improve services and more closely meet the needs of patients and their relatives.

Last year the trust set up a new patient experience group; to help focus on how to make the best use of the hospital environment, support services and customer care.

Patients are also encouraged to give views and opinions of their care in the Healthcare Commission's annual patient surveys. In the most recent inpatient survey nine out of ten patients rated their care at the RUH as good or better. Most of those

who responded to the survey had trust in the doctors and nurses treating them and believed they were cared for with dignity and respect.

James Carine, Chairman of the RUH says: "While there is always room for improvement, this year has seen great progress. I only wish I could claim credit for it but the foundations were laid and built upon while my predecessor Mike Roy was chairman. I do wish to acknowledge the support we enjoy from Forever Friends, the League of Hospital Friends, the Bath Cancer Support Unit and the Hospital Radio Service and many other people; they make enormous contributions to the well being of our patients."

James Scott, chief executive of the RUH says: "A lot of progress in many areas has been made by RUH in the last year. The trust has worked extremely hard to address its financial difficulties which has meant that the trust has broken even for the first time in its history. This is a real achievement and I would like to pay tribute to all our staff who helped reach this important milestone as well as my predecessor Mark Davies, and our outgoing finance director John Williams.

"Our top priorities for the coming year, in line with national targets, will be to ensure that patients receive their treatment within 18 weeks of their referral from their GP and continuing to reduce MRSA and other hospital infections. We will also be concentrating on improving aspects of care which patients say really matter to them such as reducing cancelled operations and providing a clean, comfortable hospital environment.

"I have joined the trust at a time when staff now have the opportunity to step back and consider what changes can now be made so that we can provide even more effective and efficient patient care whilst remaining in a financially stable position. In April we appointed change consultants to help us realise these ambitions and over the next few months staff will be getting involved and contributing their ideas for improvements."

Ends

Issued by the communications team:

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