

Press Release

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RUH says 'hands up, sleeves up, thumbs up!'

A week long high profile campaign, '*Hands up, sleeves up, thumbs up*', aimed at staff, patients and visitors, gets underway at the Royal United Hospital (RUH) on Monday 24 September. This is part of the RUH's ongoing initiative aimed at further reducing hospital acquired infections and making the hospital a safer place.

'*Hands up*' signifies the importance of good hand hygiene. It also shows how staff are being encouraged to put their hands up, to reinforce their willingness to be open and own up to occasions when we have not met the highest standards. '*Sleeves up*' promotes the new NHS policy about clinical staff being bare below the elbow in order to lessen the risk of spreading infection and '*thumbs up*' is an opportunity to celebrate achievements the trust has already made in tackling infections and promoting good infection control practice.

The RUH is involving local school children across the Bath area who have been hard at work producing art on the theme of '*hands up, sleeves up, thumbs up*'. Their work will be displayed at the hospital and the school with the best entries will win their very own glow box. These amazing gadgets highlight the areas that have been missed during hand washing and demonstrate the importance of washing hands correctly.

The trust will also be reinforcing the efforts being made in the hospital to tackle infection. In line with national NHS initiatives, clinical staff have already been encouraged to roll-up their sleeves and remove watches and jewellery so that arms are bare below the elbow. The practicalities of the wearing of hospital tunics and trousers on the wards instead of own clothing is being investigated.

The week's campaign will conclude with the trust making a public commitment to being open with patients as part of a national drive led by the Patient Safety Agency (NPSA).

Whilst the trust has always recognised that openness with patients is best practice, a nationwide campaign by the National Patient Safety Agency has led to the release of a 'Being Open' policy. This acknowledges that healthcare is extremely complex and errors may occur and aims to encourage and guide staff in communicating with patients when mistakes have been made. The policy ensures that if a patient is harmed they will receive an apology, be

kept fully informed as to what has happened, have their questions answered and know what is being done in response.

By speaking openly and honestly to patients who have been harmed by healthcare processes, staff at the RUH can help reduce the trauma patients might suffer and learn valuable lessons that will go towards ensuring that mistake are less likely to happen again.

Looking ahead to the campaign week Francesca Thompson, director of nursing at the RUH says: "This campaign gives us the chance to bring together many of the initiatives and activities that are ongoing throughout the hospital, aimed at making the RUH safer and better for our patients as well as our staff and visitors.

"Tackling infection is one of our top priorities and we also know that this is an issue of great importance to patients and their relatives. We have made significant progress in reducing rates of MRSA and C.Diff and are continuing our efforts. For example earlier this month we introduced new more restricted visiting arrangements to help make the hospital cleaner and safer for patients and we are looking at the effectiveness of infection prevention and control initiatives such as the wearing of tunics and trousers on the wards.

"We all have a part to play in infection prevention and control and it is through campaigns such as this that we have a chance to remind everyone using the hospital that they need to take responsibility for their actions and do their bit to help. I am sure that everyone coming to the RUH, whether they are staff, patients or visitors will get the message about how important our hands are in the control of infection and ultimately, the care of our patients and the wider community."

Notes to editors

There will be a picture/media opportunity on Thursday 20 September at 11.30am when doctors and nurses will gather in the atrium to launch the campaign. Please contact the communications office.

ENDS

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