

Press Release

Issue date: 12 October 2007

A STITCH IN TIME.....SAVES PAIN

The needles are clicking and the crochet needles are out in the Royal United Hospital's (RUH) Pain Management Unit as patients are encouraged to return to a centuries old hobby which has been dubbed "the new yoga".

The belief that knitting can have therapeutic effects has led to the setting up of a new patients group in the pain clinic: "Stitch, Links and Chatter ". The group, which meets twice a month, was set up by nurse practitioner Carol Davidson:

"There is substantial anecdotal evidence that the repetitive nature of knitting and the distraction it provides, allows people to be less aware of their pain. It's also a valuable social interaction for our patients, many of whom are isolated because of the chronic nature of their conditions."

Betsan Corkhill, a physiotherapist who helped get the group off the ground, has been gathering evidence on the positive effects of knitting and cross stitching on her website Stitchlink.com

"The testimonies I have collected strongly suggest that knitting and stitching could be effective therapies for a number of conditions like chronic pain, depression and could help in breaking addictive habits"

The belief that knitting can help patients both physically and mentally is being scientifically tested by researchers at Cardiff University. A pilot study is looking at whether the rhythm involved in knitting can help eliminate negative thought cycles and rumination.

RUH Pain unit psychologist Mike Osborn says: "the knitting group is a superb example of an activity that works for loads of different reasons, it's physical, productive, social, almost meditative and helps people to engage in meaningful activity – chronic pain can take the meaning out of your life and if you can retrieve some of it through knitting or anything like it that's a great idea."

Set up in the summer, the group has 8 members with a further 30 interested in getting involved. Some of the women knit for friends and family but have discovered an outlet for their talents in the hospital itself – by knitting for premature babies in the neo natal intensive care unit. (NICU) The tiny garments not only keep the babies warm, they help normalise their appearance as anxious parents come to terms with watching their tiny children through the maze of wires and tubes that are keeping them alive. Knitting for such small babies requires use of special patterns and yarns as the babies skins are so sensitive and their skulls so small.

Sue Pike, who suffers from chronic back pain, attends the sessions and knits for the NICU" it gives me great pleasure to know that what I knit will help a family with a premature baby. The knitting itself I find very relaxing, and living with severe pain, anything that helps you relax is a bonus. The group has a really good atmosphere"

Ends

Photo Opportunity 2pm on Tuesday 16 October when group next meets in the Hospital Pain Clinic

Notes to Editors:

RUH Pain Management Unit has 1000 referrals a year and runs a pain management programme staffed by doctors, a psychologist, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist and specialist nurses

Week beginning 13 Oct is National Knitting Week – more info on www.bhkc.co.uk
For more info on positive effects of knitting – www.stitchlinks.com

Issued by: Brigid Devlin, communications office. Contact 01225 825849