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Communications Department  
Tel: 01225 82 5849/5799/6230/1299

communication@ruh.nhs.uk  
www.ruh.nhs.uk

## Media Release

### Spare a thought

When you finally shut your front door on Christmas Eve in anticipation of the fun filled days ahead, spare a thought for staff and patients at the Royal United Hospital, whose doors always remain open.

Whilst all the usual festive preparations are going on at home, many people will be spending an unfamiliar Christmas in hospital. Staff will be doing their best to celebrate with their patients on the wards, but Christmas on the intensive care unit feels very different.

Senior sister Marghanita Jenkins in ITU says: "We can't jolly patients along, often many of them will be unaware that Christmas has arrived or that a present has been delivered. We do our best to ensure that the spirit of Christmas exists for the relatives as they spend a lot of time sitting with their loved ones. We make a fuss of them and they know how much we care.

"We try to make things feel a different in small ways, for instance there'll be the usual ward round by the on-call consultant, but they'll be accompanied by Christmas hymns and carols. We try to arrange breaks so that staff can enjoy Christmas food of some kind, whether it's lunch in the restaurant or festive food on the unit."

Understandably, people want to get home for Christmas and staff do all they can to make that happen - even if it is just for a few hours - but it's not always possible. If you are unfortunate enough to be an inpatient over the holiday perhaps it will be of some comfort to know that Christmas elsewhere in the hospital can be still be special.

Medical Nurse Practitioner Philippa Nash has spent many a Christmas holiday working on wards at the RUH. She says: "We'll have bought and wrapped presents to give to patients to open on Christmas morning. We'll often have music playing or there will a visit from a choir or the Salvation Army to sing carols and there's sure to be a mince pie or a chocolate or two. The staff all pull together to make it as special as they can for patients - there's great camaraderie.

"There's less of a Monday to Friday routine in the sense that there are no ward rounds and patients aren't going off for investigations, so it can feel more peaceful. We have more time sit and chat to patients and listen to their stories. We can enjoy a cup of coffee and rest our feet a bit.

"It can be really tough knowing that you have to get up early to work on Christmas morning and that you'll miss your children open their stockings, but you know that everyone at the hospital is there at some sacrifice or emotional cost, whether you are a patient, a family member or staff."

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