

8 February 2010

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Media Release

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RUH has the WOW factor - releasing time to care

Nurses at the Royal United Hospital have increased the time they spend at a patient's bedside by over 25%. By making improvements and efficiencies in the way they work, nurses have released more time to spend on direct patient care.

Assistant Director of Nursing Sharon Bonson has been working with staff to take forward ideas that have come out of the Well Organised Ward (WOW) project, which is freeing-up more time to care for patients.

Sharon says "The WOW project has encouraged staff to look at what, how and why they do things with fresh eyes. They are coming up with all sorts of ways to make us more efficient, which gives us a bit more time to do what we do best.

"Some of the simplest ideas - from changing the way equipment is stored and accessed, to the more complex - changing how we manage a patient's care, is having an impact. It's not rocket science but it works. We've measured that 'direct care time' in ITU has increased from 48% to 73%, that's 32% more nursing time spent at the bedside."

This work is part of the national Productive Ward initiative which was developed by the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement, in response to the discovery that, on average, registered nurses in the NHS spent only 40% of their time providing direct patient care. By focusing on improving ward processes and environments, nurses and therapists are helped to spend more time with the patients they look after.

For example, a new purpose-built storage system is now being used in ITU and on several hospital wards. Stock is stored in bar-coded drawers rather than shelving, with their contents entered on a database. As well as getting to it quicker, staff can find what they are looking for straight away, and stock levels are easily monitored and maintained.

Wards are also using a new white board system which shows 'patient status at a glance'. Traffic lights (red, amber and green coloured magnets) are used to signify a stage or next step in the patient's care. It saves a significant amount of time and means staff are all up-to-date with the needs of every patient.

Sharon adds: "The best organisations have to continually strive to increase quality and efficiency and the improvements achieved by staff has allowed more time for the things that matter, namely providing excellent quality, safe and courteous care to patients."

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