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Media Release

RUH excels in stroke care

Patients at risk of having a stroke are more likely to get time-critical treatment and care on a specialist ward at the Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Trust than in many other places in the UK.

The 2010 Public Report on Stroke Care, published today (19th August) by the Royal College of Physicians puts the RUH in the top 25% of hospitals for our organisation and delivery of stroke care. All hospitals were scored for their access to stroke clinics, waiting times, patient involvement and the existence of a specialised team for all levels of stroke care and surgery.

By working with community health teams in Wiltshire and Bath and North East Somerset, patients at risk of having a stroke can be identified more quickly than in recent years and admitted for tests or treatment. In addition, 90% of those who have already suffered a stroke will be admitted to a specialist stroke ward. In the past many stroke patients were admitted to general wards and this could severely hinder their recovery.

People who suffer a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) or mini-stroke who are found to have furring of the arteries to the brain should have surgery within a maximum of 2 weeks of suffering the attack to help prevent a full-blown stroke. People who suffer a mini stroke have a 30% chance of suffering a stroke within a relatively short time period and half will die as a result. Recently the Royal College of Physicians and Vascular Society said that just a third of patients, nationally, were receiving that specialist surgery within 2 weeks and many do not get it at all.

However, at the RUH, 25 out of 30 (83%) stroke patients seen during 2009 underwent the surgery to their carotid artery in the neck within 2 weeks and made a full recovery. By having surgery within that 2 week time frame, the chance of having a full-blown stroke drops to just 3%. For stroke patients coming to the RUH, they often undergo surgery even quicker than that.

Mahesh Pai is a Consultant Vascular Surgeon at the RUH and, with Consultant Stroke Physician Louise Shaw, has pioneered the developments in stroke care at the Trust.

He says "This was possible only because of the close working relationship between the vascular unit and the stroke unit. I am lucky to have very supportive anaesthetists, and experienced theatre and ward staff without whom we would not have achieved this. We hope to improve even further so not a single patient misses the 2-week deadline."

Dr Shaw agrees, saying “We have worked hard over the last few years to transform the stroke service at the RUH. Key developments have been opening a dedicated Acute Stroke Unit, establishing direct admission pathways to the Unit from the Emergency Department and improving timeliness of CT brain scanning. We have also established a successful ‘clot-busting’ service and rapid-access TIA clinics. I am grateful for all the support I have had from across the hospital to make this possible, and thrilled to see it making a difference to those unfortunate enough to suffer a stroke, and their families.”

ENDS

Recently, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) published new national quality standards for stroke care. These stress the importance of prompt access to surgery and being treated within a specialist stroke unit. Full details of the standards can be found at www.nice.org.uk

The 2010 National Sentinel Public Report can be found in full here
<https://audit.rcplondon.ac.uk/sentinelstroke/website/files/2010%20public%20report%20-%20organisational.pdf>

For more information, or for the opportunity to interview either Mr Mahesh Pai (all day) or Dr Louise Shaw (am only) on the 19th August 2010, please contact Communications on 01225 826230.

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