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Media Release

RUH awarded grant to improve care for patients with Parkinson's disease

The Royal United Hospital Bath has been awarded £150,000 to improve the way patients with Parkinson's disease are given medicines.

The Safer Clinical Systems award from The Health Foundation will be used to explore how we can improve the way medicines are given to this group of patients, who can be particularly vulnerable in the hospital environment.

Patients with Parkinson's disease are dependent on their medication for basic functions such as moving, coughing and swallowing and may have complex medication needs. It is particularly important that they receive the correct dose at the right time in order to avoid secondary complications and a longer hospital stay.

Around 900 patients with the disease live locally, up to 20 of whom are admitted to the RUH every month, meaning that most clinical staff will be looking after people with Parkinson's from time to time, whatever their speciality.

The hospital will initially use the money to focus on improving the administration of medicines for patients with Parkinson's, but lessons learned from the project will be relevant for the timely delivery of drugs for all patients.

The RUH was one of eight trusts to receive the award out of 49 which applied.

Consultant Physician Dr Dorothy Robertson, a specialist in treating Parkinson's, says:

"We are delighted to have received this award. The delivery of medication is an essential part of in-patient treatment and needs to be performed reliably, and this grant will help us to improve on this.

"We will be involving local people with Parkinson's and our colleagues in primary care to examine the whole patient experience from home to hospital and back home again. If patients don't get their Parkinson's medication on time, symptoms increase and their care needs change. For example they may suddenly not be able to move, get out of bed or feed themselves unaided.

"A Parkinson's patient's length of stay is, on average, five days longer than the norm and we can improve this and get patients back to where they need to be, if they get their medication on time."

Making improvements for services especially for patients with dementia, learning disabilities and Parkinson's disease is one of the hospital's key priorities for 2011/12.

Ends