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Communications Department

Tel: 01225 82 5849/5799/6230

RUHcommunications@nhs.net

www.ruh.nhs.uk

Media Release

RUH to lead national Sign up to Safety campaign

The Royal United Hospital Bath has been named as one of the leaders of a new national campaign, in recognition of its outstanding work to improve patient safety.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt made the announcement at the national launch of Sign up to Safety, which is designed to help realise the ambition of making the NHS the safest healthcare system in the world by creating a system devoted to continuous learning and improvement.

The RUH is committed to continuous quality improvement and has signed up to: listen to patients, carers and staff; learn from what they say when things go wrong; and take action to improve patients' safety.

It has also made the following five pledges:

- Put safety first – we will commit to reduce avoidable harm in the NHS by half and make public the goals and plans developed locally
- Continually learn – we will make our organisation more resilient to risks, by acting on the feedback from patients and by constantly measuring and monitoring how safe their services are
- Honesty – we will be transparent with people about our progress to tackle patient safety issues and support staff to be candid with patients and their families if something goes wrong
- Collaborate – we will take a leading role in supporting local collaborative learning, so that improvements are made across all of the local services that patients use
- Support – we will help people to understand why things go wrong and how to put them right. We will give our staff the time and support to improve and celebrate the progress.

Dr Tim Craft, RUH Medical Director, said: "We are proud to have been chosen by the Secretary of State for Health as one of the 12 vanguard Trusts to lead this campaign. Our commitment to Sign up to Safety arises from how we put patients at the heart of everything that we do, yet we know that there will always be more that can be done to further improve the safety of care that we offer.

“Our participation in the campaign reflects our willingness to have open and honest conversations with our patients, to learn from other Trusts, and to share what we have learned with others.

“A collective voice and a partnership of patient safety leaders will help to develop a more cohesive, safer national health service, building on the good practice that already exists.

“We believe patient safety is everyone’s responsibility and we are absolutely committed to continually improving, and helping others to do the same.”

The first step to improving the safety of care offered to patients is for hospitals to be open and transparent when harm or potential harm occurs. Staff should have the confidence to report incidents and help their organisation to reduce the risks of healthcare.

Today, new information published on the NHS Choices website will show that there is more that the RUH can do to encourage open and honest reporting of patient safety incidents, as the number of incidents reported by staff is lower than expected.

This information is based on reporting rates from the summer of 2013. In the last nine months the RUH has updated its incident reporting system and trained more staff in its use, which has seen an increase in the number of incidents reported. This has enabled the Trust to identify themes and make improvements. Our own data shows that our incident reporting rate is now above the national average and we are confident that our patients are already benefiting from the climate of openness and honesty at the RUH.

The RUH’s patient safety work has been recognised national and internationally. It has taken the leading role in supporting local collaborative learning, so that improvements are made for patients. The Trust hosted the South West Quality and Patient Safety Improvement Programme, working closely with other local Trusts to further develop a culture of patient safety and quality improvement. This five-year campaign has seen harmful incidents halved in many of the participating hospitals and hospital mortality cut by a fifth across the South West.

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