

Date: 21.08.15

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Media Release

Bath residents receive Lawrence Medal for managing type 1 diabetes for 60 years

Bath residents have received an award for their successful long-term management of type 1 diabetes.

Arthur Wheeler from Southdown and John Berry of Oldfield Park were each awarded the Lawrence Medal from Diabetes UK in recognition of having lived with the disease for 60 years. The medal is named after Dr Robert Lawrence, who co-founded the Diabetic Association, now known as Diabetes UK, with H.G. Wells in 1934. The men received their medals at a ceremony at the RUH.

Arthur Wheeler said: "I received my diagnosis when I was just 12 years old. It was my mum who spotted the symptoms first – and she took me to the doctors to seek a diagnosis. At first the doctor was sceptical, but my mother was persistent and they soon discovered that I was diabetic. My mum and dad had a tough time coping with my diabetes, as they both had health issues of their own, so I spent several years in a Barnardo's Children's Home, where – along with other children with diabetes – I learned to manage my condition.

"I've lived in Bath now for 47 years, and have been under the care of the RUH for the whole of that time. They have been brilliant in helping me to manage my diabetes. I would say to anyone newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes that it can be a challenge, but you can manage it if you put your mind to it."

John Berry said: "I'm really proud to have received the award. I've dedicated my medal to my mother and I plan to put it up on the mantelpiece when I get home. How often I come into the RUH for treatment depends upon how I am managing my diabetes, but I can now go months without needing to be seen."

Two other Bath residents, Rosemary Warner of Odd Down and Peter Shipp of Oldfield Park, were also awarded at the ceremony for successfully managing their type 1 diabetes for 50 years. They were both presented with Nabarro medals – named after Alan Nabarro OBE, who dedicated himself to improving life for people with diabetes.

Peter Shipp of Oldfield Park, who was diagnosed at seven years of age, said: "My diabetes has led to the loss of one of my legs below the knee, and has also affected my sight. But I have got through it and I am so well supported by the diabetes and endocrinology team at the RUH. I have three lovely children, none of whom have type 1 diabetes, and that makes me very happy."

Rosemary Warner of Odd Down, who was diagnosed at 12 years of age, added: "I've been looked after at the RUH for the whole of the time I've lived with diabetes and they've supported me every step of the way. Type 1 diabetes runs in my family – my dad and brother both have the condition. But I'm happy to say that I am managing it very well indeed."

The RUH is committed to further improving the care of inpatients with diabetes. The establishment of an Acute Diabetes Service at the hospital in 2014 has been a key element in driving this improvement. The team supports inpatients to manage their diabetes while they are in hospital and draws up a diabetes care plan for patients with the condition to make sure the disease is kept under control throughout their stay.

The diabetes and endocrinology team at the RUH are also supporting a project to improve diabetes care in the community so that patients can receive more of their treatment and the expertise of our teams closer to home.

Ends

Notes to the editor:

Type 1 diabetes

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the body is unable to produce insulin which helps to regulate glucose in the blood. Type 1 diabetes can develop at any age, but usually appears before the age of 40, particularly in childhood. Around 10% of all diabetes is type 1, but it's the most common type of childhood diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes

In type 2 diabetes, the body either doesn't produce enough insulin to function properly, or the body's cells don't react to insulin. Around 90% of adults with diabetes have type 2, and it tends to develop later in life than type 1. Type 2 diabetes is on the increase and is thought to be linked to lifestyle and dietary factors.