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Media Release

Talking about dying – The Conversation Project

An innovative project at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust promoting the importance of end of life conversations is highlighted in a new report that says doctors need to get better at talking about dying to patients.

The report, Talking about dying, by the Royal College of Physicians, says it is vital that medical staff have the knowledge and skills to undertake sensitive conversations when patients are ready.

The RUH Trust is named, and included as a good practice case study, as one of four English hospitals leading the way in supporting end of life care and talking honestly and openly about death.

The RUH began its initiative, called The Conversation Project, five years ago, aiming to support earlier recognition of patients with end of life needs and improving communication and planning ahead for the end of life – such as deciding on what treatment to take or refuse, or where to spend your final days.

Helen Meehan, RUH lead nurse Palliative and End of Life Care, said:

“Caring for people nearing the end of life is one of the most important things we do, not only in hospital but also in our communities. The Conversation Project at the RUH is supporting our staff to have sensitive and compassionate conversations with patients and their families when treatment is no longer curative or recovery is uncertain.

“The conversations support patients to consider what is important to them and what wishes they might have for future care, including their end of life care. We know that if we have these conversations earlier and support patients and their families with thinking about planning ahead, they are more likely to receive the appropriate support when it is needed.”



Professor Andrew Goddard, President of the Royal College of Physicians, said: “This report is a big step forward in helping patients, relatives and doctors to talk honestly about death and dying. We must minimise the barriers in our systems and culture that prevent this from happening. This is not just about palliative care in the final days, but about having a series of conversations much earlier after a terminal diagnosis.”

Ends

Notes to Editor:

- The Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust provides acute treatment and care for a catchment population of around 500,000 people in Bath, and the surrounding towns and villages in North East Somerset and Western Wiltshire. The hospital provides healthcare to the population served by four Clinical Commissioning Groups: Bath & North East Somerset CCG, Wiltshire CCG, Somerset CCG and South Gloucestershire CCG.
- The Trust has 759 beds and a comprehensive range of acute services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.
- In 2015 The Royal United Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust acquired the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases (RNHRD) NHS Foundation Trust. The RNHRD treats patients from across the country offering services in rheumatology, chronic pain, chronic fatigue syndrome/ME, cancer related fatigue and fatigue linked to other long term conditions such as multiple sclerosis
- The RUH is changing - we have an exciting programme of redevelopment underway transforming our site and further improving the services we provide. The Trust is now building a purpose built RNHRD and Therapies Centre and working towards the new Dyson Cancer Centre. For more details visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk/about/fit_for_the_future
- For more information about the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk

