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Media Release

Suki's a scientist for the day

A young girl with leukaemia has become the first to experience a 'trainee scientist' tour of the pathology laboratory at Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust.

Six year old Suki Corbett, from Devizes in Wiltshire, was given a private and interactive guided tour –even testing her own blood samples along the way.

Suki is part way through two and a half years of treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, after being diagnosed at the age of four in January 2017.

The tour was arranged by Harvey's Gang, a charity dedicated to giving seriously ill youngsters trainee scientist tours around pathology labs. Suki was nominated for the tour by her CLIC Sargent paediatric oncology nurse specialist Sarah Fay when she saw how curious Suki was about her blood tests, often asking where the blood went and what happened to it.

On the tour, Suki was given her own mini lab coat and ID badge, booked in and labelled her own blood samples and watched as the machines whizzed and whirred processing them. Next she tested her sample to discover what blood type she was, looked at samples through a microscope and had a race with a scientist to fill up and then empty a pipette. The tour was topped off with a goody bag and certificate.

Suki said: "It was so interesting visiting the lab, everyone was really nice. I loved testing my own blood and working out my blood type."

Suki was accompanied on the tour by her mum Rachel who said: "Very early on in treatment Suki expressed an interest in finding out what happens when her bloods are 'sent to the lab'. She was so excited when a visit was organised especially for her. The whole morning was fascinating and Suki was in her element learning about blood types, some of the many stages of testing and looking at cells under a microscope. Everyone in the lab was so welcoming, they devoted so much time and attention to her, it really was a privilege to have such an in depth tour. It's undoubtedly one of the highlights of our many hospital visits in recent years."



RUH Senior Biomedical Scientist in the Biochemistry department Helen Witham said: “Our busy lab analyses on average 4,000 samples a day to help in the diagnosis and monitoring of disease in patients. Dave Fisher, Haematology manager and I were delighted to organise this tour for Suki to show her the work we do. She is an incredible, brave and clearly very bright young girl.”

Suki’s mum Rachel has set up a Facebook Page documenting their journey with leukaemia, you can find it by searching ‘Sukistar’ on Facebook.

Ends

About Harvey’s Gang

Harvey’s Gang was set up in 2014 by Malcolm Robinson, Chief Biomedical Scientist at Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, when he met a young boy with leukaemia called Harvey who was on a ‘Trainee scientist’ tour of the Worthing Hospital pathology laboratory. After seeing how much Harvey enjoyed his visit, Malcolm discovered that they had seven other critically ill youngsters that wanted to visit the laboratory too, and so “Harvey’s Gang” was created.

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 provides 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 and 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 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

