

11.12.19

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## Older patients enjoy poetry readings at the RUH

Patients on one of the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust's dedicated wards for older people enjoyed an early Christmas present when they were treated to a series of poetry readings.

Patients on Combe ward, many of whom have dementia, heard a range of classic poems, including *The Owl and the Pussycat* and *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*.

The poems were read by Caroline Groom and Mike Roy, both volunteers with the Friendly Faces project, which provides a 'friendly face' to patients during their stay. A friendly face can simply be someone to sit and talk to or play a game of cards with, or even join in with some singing. Volunteers also provide various activity sessions on the wards, including a movement class and art sessions.

Caroline said: "I started reading aloud to people because it was something I could do as a volunteer, and I know that it has a soothing effect. People may think that they are not familiar with poetry, but rhymes we learn in early life stay with us.

"It is a joy to see a person brighten up when they hear 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' or 'The Owl and the Pussycat went to Sea'. These poems can stimulate memories and discussion, but modern and funny poems are popular too."

Tracy Williams, the Alzheimer's Society's Volunteer Coordinator at the RUH, said: "Often a hospital stay for a patient living with dementia can be quite distressing and confusing. The aim of the poetry readings is to help reduce anxiety in patients, relieve boredom and stimulate conversation.

"These poetry sessions have proved a real success on Combe ward and we're hoping we can extend them to other wards across the RUH."

The RUH is committed to becoming an even more dementia-friendly hospital. Around 75% of our patients are over 65 and of that patient group, around 30% are living with dementia – but may be in hospital for other treatment.

Earlier this year, the RUH launched its ground-breaking audiobooks for dementia patients' initiative which has proved so successful it is being copied throughout the country. Patients with dementia now have the chance to listen to audiobooks, plays and TV and radio shows during their stay at the RUH. The aim of the initiative is to keep patients stimulated and engaged, while helping to relieve some of the boredom of being in hospital.

On Combe ward, nursing stations are placed in each of the bays on the ward, so that staff can observe patients and patients can be reassured by their presence. Brightly-coloured flooring marks out the different areas of the ward and signs have both text and pictures. The lighting on the ward is soft and even, and changes gradually throughout the day to give patients a sense of the passing of time.

Recent improvements to the hospital's Medical Assessment Unit have seen larger, dementia-friendly signs installed around the unit, to help patients navigate their way around.

You can find out more about the Friendly Faces project on The Forever Friends Appeal website – [www.foreverfriendsappeal.co.uk](http://www.foreverfriendsappeal.co.uk)

## 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 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 has opened the purpose-built RNHRD and

Brownsword Therapies Centre and is now working towards the new Dyson Cancer Centre. For more details visit: [www.ruh.nhs.uk/about/fit\\_for\\_the\\_future](http://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](http://www.ruh.nhs.uk)

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