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2020 vision for patients as eye surgery gets back underway

The Ophthalmology team at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust has been the first specialty to restart routine surgery, following the postponement of operations during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before they restarted surgery on patients, the team set up a trial operating day, where they practised operations on realistic plastic eyes, which look like small fried eggs and are specifically designed for a cataract operation to be performed.

The aim was to practice every step of the process, from putting on and taking off the new PPE, to social distancing and explaining to patients about the new ways of working we've put in place to keep patients and staff safe.

The team used four simulation eyes and treated each one as a real 'patient'.

The first sim eye was admitted to the ward at 7.45am. The nurses put on PPE, introduced themselves, admitted the 'patient' and put the sim eye onto a trolley. The surgeons also put on their PPE, introduced themselves and went through the whole consent procedure.

The sim eye was then taken on a trolley through to the operating theatre where surgeons performed every step of the operation in full.

Consultant Ophthalmologist Jonathan Boulton said: "The trial operating day was a real success. All theatre staff were able to practice operating within the new guidelines, wearing full PPE and performing all the necessary safety checks.

"It allowed us to get used to the new ways of working and the procedures we would need to follow, before we started operating on real patients.

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“It felt good to be starting again and I’m delighted that Ophthalmology was chosen to be the first specialty to restart routine surgery at the RUH since lockdown began.”

Nicola Haththotuwegama, a Senior Nurse in day surgery who took notes throughout the trial day, said: “During the COVID crisis, our theatre staff have been looking after ventilated patients. It was good for them, after so many weeks away from operating, to get their hands back onto the instruments, and to ease back safely into the rhythm of surgery.”

The RUH is working towards increasing the number of routine surgeries taking place at the Trust whilst also responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patients who are due to have an operation at the RUH during the COVID-19 pandemic must isolate for 14 days prior to the date of their surgery. This also applies to everyone in their household. Patient safety is our priority, so it’s important that patients do not have coronavirus when they have their operation.

There’s more information available on our website: <https://bit.ly/2VDdTYC>

Ends

Notes to Editor:

The World Health Organization has designated 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. Our nurses and midwives are a big part of the RUH family and throughout the year we are celebrating the work they do, going above and beyond every day to give our patients compassionate care.

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

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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

For more information about the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk