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Media Release

RUH patients and staff benefit from new virtual ward rounds

Doctors at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust are using new technology to trial virtual ward rounds, reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19 by minimising footfall on the hospital's wards.

Patients continue to receive the same level of care and support, but doctors can speak to patients while they are in their hospital bed by using one of a number of iPads that have been donated to the hospital from the Dyson Foundation, via the Forever Friends Appeal – the hospital's charity.

While a small clinical team needs to be on the wards in person during ward rounds, these new ways of working are proving successful in reducing disruption as well as the number of people on the ward at any one time.

Caroline, a patient being treated for Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML) on William Budd ward, said: "It was especially nice to see the doctors' faces without face masks. I thought that there might be quality issues but actually the sound and picture quality on the iPads was better than I expected and there were no delays in speaking.

"I think the virtual ward rounds probably save the doctors some time, but at no point in any of my consultations have I felt rushed. I still liked having someone in the room with me in person though.

"Definitely the biggest plus is that you can see the consultant's whole face like the good old days – it makes a real difference."

RUH Medical Director Bernie Marden said: "Virtual ward rounds have proved extremely successful with both patients and our staff.

"Our doctors and consultants can speak to patients without being on the ward and so can safely remove their masks, and patients have told us how they have appreciated being able to see their consultant's face, which they wouldn't normally be able to do if we were in full PPE by their bedside.

“Other clinical staff are able to join the rounds virtually too, so there’s only a small team of staff needed on the ward to physically conduct the ward round and operate the iPads, which are regularly cleaned and sanitised.

“Despite their being less people on the wards, our patients still get the same excellent level of care provided by our clinical teams, just more of it takes place virtually.

“Minimising footfall on our wards, is another way of reducing the risk of spreading infection, along with our other infection prevention and control measures.

“We have also been able to improve the service we provide to our patients, as the patient can now see their test results and x-rays on the screen and have it explained to them by the consultant, something which is easier to do than before.

“At the RUH we are committed to quality improvement and innovation and are always looking at ways we can become more digital, when it will benefit our patients. This is not to say we’ll be losing that vital, human contact, which we know is so valued by our patients.

“We’re extremely grateful to Dyson for their donation, which has also meant we can use the iPads to help keep patients in touch with their families while visiting is suspended at the hospital.”

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

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

Chair:
Alison Ryan

Chief Executive:
Cara Charles-Barks



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Matters
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Together
Making a
Difference