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Media Release

RUH COVID-19 patients reflect on intensive care experience

COVID-19 patients treated in intensive care at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust have paid tribute to the care they received.

In a moving new video three patients, Gary, Caroline and Lee, talk about what they remember from the time they were critically unwell, and what it was like for their loved ones too.

Their experiences were recorded for See It My Way – a regular series of look-back videos for staff to learn from – and are a moving reminder of the importance of continuing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Caroline Jones, from Bath, said: “We’d been very cautious about spending Christmas together but unfortunately one of us got Covid, then all of us got it.

“I ended up a couple of hours away from passing away. I could send a couple of quick text messages to tell friends what was happening, then for two weeks it was like I was in a cavern. I was in a coma essentially.

“I was in intensive care for 33 days. When I came to I couldn’t speak, I couldn’t write, I couldn’t move my legs. The nurses become such an emotional support for you.

“One nurse sat with me and stroked my head, and it really made me feel so much better. The small things go a long, long way when you’re suffering.

“I view every moment of life as a precious gift and I’ve been given a gift, mostly due to this amazing hospital and the staff who were my family. I’m so grateful to them. I’m one of the lucky ones.”

Gary Lloyd, from Keynsham, fell ill at home at the end of March. He said: “I remember coming into the RUH, but 24 hours later I was put into a coma. I eventually opened my eyes after 42 days, and I thought I’d only been there for two days.

“Now, I can remember the staff saying things to me like ‘squeeze my hand if you can hear me, you’re ok.’

“I developed kidney failure, blood clots, bowel failure, and sepsis but I didn’t know anything about this – it was my wife Zoe and the family that were living it.”

Lee Tilley, from Westbury, was care for in intensive care for five weeks, after which he continued his recovery on a ward. He is now being supported by a long-Covid team.

Lee said: “I caught Covid and unfortunately also had sepsis and pneumonia at the same time. I was very ill and had to be put into a coma.

“It was touch and go a couple of times and my loved ones would dread the phone calls, because every time the hospital called something else had happened. I had a stroke while I was in the coma.”

More than 190 COVID-19 patients have been cared for in intensive care at the RUH, since the pandemic began.

The video also features staff reflecting on working in intensive care throughout the pandemic, describing how small acts of kindness, like getting 50th birthday balloons for a patient, can make such a difference for patients and their families.

Medical Director Bernie Marden said: “Our intensive care team go above and beyond to look after the medical needs of our patients, but also the emotional needs of patients and their loved ones too. We’re really proud of them.

“In the video our patients talk really movingly about what it was like to be so near death. Of course we don’t want any of our patients and their loved ones to experience that, but that’s the stark reality of COVID-19.

“Unfortunately COVID-19 hasn’t gone away, and it’s vital we all remain vigilant.

“I’d encourage everyone to keep doing everything they can. That includes having the COVID-19 vaccination, or booster if you’re eligible, wearing face masks when you’re out and about in busy places, and washing your hands.

“Together, these things will help to prevent others going through the same experience as Gary, Lee and Caroline.”

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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