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Media Release

RUH takes leading role in groundbreaking Stroke research study

A new research programme aimed at helping stroke patients to recover the ability to swallow again is taking place at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust.

The RUH is the first trial site in the country to go live with the study and one of only two sites taking part in the South West.

The PhEAST study aims to help stroke patients who are unable to swallow food and drink to re-train their brain so that they can swallow independently again.

The study uses special nasal gastric tubes, which are used to feed patients, fitted with tiny electrodes. The electrodes are used to deliver short bursts of current directly to the muscles and nerves that are used for swallowing.

It is hoped that by stimulating these nerves, the electric current will help to re-programme the swallowing centres in the brain. The stimulation can barely be felt by patients.

A stroke can cause swallowing problems in half of patients, many of whom still have abnormal swallowing a year later.

Swallowing problems lead to chest infections, poor nutrition, the need for a feeding tube inserted into the stomach, long hospital stays and disability.

Having a long term feeding tube reduces quality of life and adds to the physical, mental and emotional cost of stroke.

Emma Paulett, a speech and language therapist at the RUH who is helping to run the research, said: “We are delighted that the RUH has been chosen to take part in such an important piece of research, which we hope will make a really positive difference to the recovery of stroke patients.

“This really is a groundbreaking study which will be using the very latest in medical technology to benefit some of our most seriously ill patients.

“The RUH already has an excellent reputation for its research, and it reflects very well on the Trust that we are the first trial site in the country to go live with such an important study.”

The study is being led by Professor Philip Bath from the University of Nottingham and the special tubes being used for the research are being supplied by Phagenesis Ltd (Manchester, 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

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