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Media Release

RUH's Radiology department celebrates its 50th anniversary

This week the Radiology department at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust celebrates its 50th anniversary and members of the team have been looking back at the changes the department has seen in that time.

The department was officially opened on May 19 1975 by Prof Howard Middlemiss, the first president of the Royal College of Radiologists.

In the 50 years that have followed, much of the department has been transformed to ensure it continues to provide the very best service for the people we care for.

More than 90% of patients who attend the RUH will be seen by our radiology department for things like X-rays, CT scans and MRIs.

Radiographer Kathy Thomas said: "I was working here in the department when it opened 50 years ago. I now work flexibly as a member on the NHS staff bank and I've been doing that for about the last 10 years.

"It feels like an awfully long time, and things have changed dramatically. Our profession has developed in many ways and the technology is probably the thing that has changed the most.

"One of the most significant changes for radiographers was moving from X-ray film to digital images. X-ray films were much more difficult to handle and had to be processed, which sometimes didn't work. Someone's chest X-ray might be lost at the bottom of a tank!

"Those things don't happen now. Technology has made a huge difference, and things are much easier now."

Sarah Bond, Operational Lead Radiographer, who has been working in radiology at the RUH for 30 years said: “Thirty years ago, imaging was very much in two dimensions and all in black and white. We had light boxes in the viewing areas where we would stick our films to see them.

“Nowadays, all images are digital, many are three-dimensional, and the resolution is much better. We can spot abnormalities and cancers that are much smaller than we could 30 years ago.

“The shift from 2D to 3D imaging has been significant. Now, we have images in colour and can manipulate them. AI is also being used in imaging and image reporting, making it a very high-tech area.

“Thirty years ago, a CT scan of the abdomen and pelvis would take 30 minutes to complete. Nowadays, it takes just 30 seconds.

“I don't know the exact number of patients we were imaging 30 or 50 years ago, but today we image more than a thousand patients a day in radiology. We operate seven days a week and have been doing so for 26 years. Although we see fewer patients on weekends, it averages out to just over a thousand patients a day across all imaging modalities.

“Radiology at the RUH is quite special. I have two colleagues who still work here and remember it from 40 and 50 years ago. The fact that they are still working here is a testament to how special the department is.

“It has grown massively, tripling in services and staff size over the 30 years I've been here. When I started, there were 11 consultant radiologists and about 50 radiographers. Now, there are 130 radiographers and 30 radiology consultants, along with all the support staff. We have three times more nurses, porters, and admin and clerical staff.

“It's a strong, cohesive team that works well together, which is essential for handling a thousand patients a day.”

The RUH continues to invest in its radiology department, making it one of the most modern and best equipped in the south west. The department has seven modern MRI and CT scanners as well as X-ray and ultrasound facilities and a PET-CT scanner used in the detection and diagnosis of cancer and dementia.

Ends

Notes to Editor:

At the RUH we're proud to put people at the heart of what we do, striving to create an environment where everyone matters. Everyone means the people we care for, the people we work with and the people in our community.

We provide a wide range of services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.

We also provide specialist services for rheumatology, chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome/ME via the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases which we acquired in 2015.

In 2021, we acquired Sulis Hospital Bath, an independent hospital that provides care for both private and NHS patients. This has enabled us to provide more care for NHS patients, as well as continuing to provide private care to those who choose it. Any additional income earned through private care is reinvested in services for the benefit of the people we care for at both Sulis and the RUH.

Our new Dyson Cancer Centre brings together many of the RUH's cancer services under one roof to provide a cancer services hub for over 500,000 people in the South West. The centre includes the RUH's oncology, chemotherapy and radiotherapy services, a 22-bed inpatient ward, a dedicated pharmacy, research team and nuclear medicine and physics teams.

A key feature of the new centre is the Macmillan Wellbeing Hub. The three-storey hub provides a welcoming, non-clinical space designed around the needs of patients and their families. It also includes comfortable accommodation where relatives and loved ones can stay overnight.

We work closely with other health and care organisations as members of the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board. We strive to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in our community by working together build one of the healthiest places to live and work.

We are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

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