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## Media Release

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### **RUH Consultant Cardiologist wins innovation award to treat patients with high blood pressure through diet**

A Bath RUH heart specialist has won national funding to pursue his passion for helping people reduce their blood pressure and cardiovascular risk factors through diet.

Consultant Cardiologist Ali Khavandi is setting up a website that will offer patients healthy eating advice – reducing their risk of stroke and heart attacks.

He said: “I’m delighted that we have been awarded the funding as I’m passionate about prevention and finding new solutions to help people lower their high blood pressure without solely relying on medication. I believe that we specialists should find new engaging ways to help people make the right choices when it comes to adopting a healthier diet and lifestyle.

“Currently, everyone with high blood pressure is advised to make the healthy lifestyle changes but there’s so much misguided information out there, it can be confusing and people often make the wrong choices when it comes to what they eat. I want to change that.”

In this pilot scheme, patients diagnosed with high blood pressure will receive a ‘health pack’ which will contain information and incentives. This will direct them to a central ‘health hub’ website giving further specific dietary information, and access to his blog, The Cardiologists Kitchen which includes healthy eating recipes.

Dr Khavandi said: “The concept is that the website will save people time in researching what foods should be eaten and where you can buy them so they can order healthy nutritious food direct to their door. We understand people lead busy lives and want convenience foods, but there’s no reason why they can’t be healthy.”

Dr Khavandi’s concept is part of the Health Foundation’s £1.5 million innovation programme, which supports innovation at the frontline across all sectors of health and care services. The project is also being backed by BANES Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health England (PHE).

To monitor the success of the project, the RUH Research and Development team will gather patient evidence over a 12 month period to demonstrate whether the initiative has made a difference in reducing peoples’ high blood pressure and improving eating habits.

Sarah Henderson, Associate Director from the Health Foundation said, “We are very excited to be working with such a high-calibre team and I’m pleased that we will be able to support the development and testing of their idea over the next year.



“Our aim is to promote the effectiveness and impact of the team’s innovation and show how they have succeeded in improving the quality of health care, with the intention of these being widely adopted across the UK.”

The programme will run for fifteen months (with three month initial set up) and each project will receive up to £75,000 of funding to support the implementation and evaluation of the project.

-ENDS-

### Notes to editor:

- People can have high blood pressure (known as hypertension) for years without any symptoms. Even without symptoms, damage to blood vessels and the heart continues and can be detected. Uncontrolled high blood pressure increases your risk of serious health problems, including heart attack and stroke
- An unhealthy lifestyle will raise your blood pressure over time (85% of patients with high blood pressure are overweight) and the higher your blood pressure becomes the higher the risk is of having a stroke or heart attack in the future
- High blood pressure has overtaken smoking as the number one risk leading to death in the UK. This has earned it a reputation as the ‘silent killer’
- The NHS spends £1 billion on prescription blood pressure medication per year
- Heart disease can occur as a result of various factors, the links between diet and heart health are well-established, in fact 80% of all premature cardiovascular disease is preventable through dietary habits and lifestyle
- 80% of all premature cases of cardiovascular disease could be prevented through adopting a healthier diet and lifestyle
- Up to 40% of the UK adult population has high blood pressure and hypertension accounts for 12% of all GP visits
- A number of selected GP practices in the BANES area will refer patients diagnosed with high blood pressure to the online solution created by Dr Khavandi and his team
- Dr Ali Khavandi is a Consultant Interventional Cardiologist at the Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Foundation Trust. He specialises in complex angioplasty and advanced rhythm device implantation. He is part of the Consultant team providing 24/7 emergency treatments for the regional heart attack service at the Bristol Heart Institute. Additionally he implants complex pacemakers and defibrillators at the Great Western Hospital in Swindon. He has a special interest in minimising pacemaker scars and the role of diet in cardiovascular conditions. This has led to appearances on BBC Horizons and he currently writes articles and recipes on the subject of diet and health for the Observer.