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## **Bath nurse's mission to raise awareness of rare illness**

Andrea Murphy, a nurse with a rare heart and lung condition is determined to raise awareness of her illness by fundraising for the charity which has supported and helped her during her diagnosis.

Andrea has Pulmonary Hypertension (PH) which occurs when the walls of the pulmonary arteries thicken and become stiff. That makes it difficult for them to expand and allow blood through to the lungs, which can cause extreme breathlessness, chronic fatigue, blackouts and heart disease.

Andrea, 38 and who has 20 years' experience in healthcare, works part-time on the Eye Unit at the Royal United Hospitals (RUH) Bath NHS Foundation Trust, says:

"I was diagnosed with PH in May 2007 having felt generally unwell for about six months. I spent a month in the RUH Coronary Care Unit (CCU) and was transferred to the Royal Free Hospital in London for specialist care - one of a handful of PH centres in the UK."

There is no cure for PH; however, there are a range of treatments available through NHS specialist centre to manage the chronic condition. As well as taking medication each day, and having regular blood tests to monitor her condition, Andrea's treatment means that she has a tube which goes straight into her heart to continuously deliver a treatment drug.

To raise funds and awareness of this rare 'invisible' disease, Andrea and her colleagues are holding a fundraising cake sale in the RUH Atrium (main entrance) on Wednesday 7 Dec at 10am. All proceeds will go to the Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA UK) and Andrea will be there to answer any questions which people may have about PH.

Andrea continues: "The ongoing care provided by my PH doctors and nurses is excellent, and enables me to lead the best quality of life I can. The NHS is often criticised, but when you are acutely ill there is no better care in the world. My family and friends are also foregoing this year's Christmas presents so we can club together money for the RUH's Intensive Therapy Unit (ITU) - they worked tirelessly to save my life in July following an emergency admission with sepsis, and I will always be indebted to them. After all, life is definitely worth the fight!"

**Ends**

**Notes:**

### **About Pulmonary Hypertension:**

- ⌚ PH is a rare lung and heart condition. There are about 7,000 cases in the UK and it is one of a number of 'invisible' illnesses. It occurs when the walls of the pulmonary arteries thicken and become stiff or are blocked by blood clots, which makes it very difficult for them to expand and allow blood through to the lungs. This places far greater pressure than normal on the right side of the heart as it pumps the blood. It can cause extreme breathlessness, blackouts and heart disease.

- ⌚ Life expectancy for those with the condition is six to seven years. A double lung and heart transplant is a treatment option for many with the condition.

Research is still being carried out into the causes of PH. It can affect people of all ages including babies, children, pregnant mums, adults and older people. PH is also associated with a number of other medical conditions such as:

- ⌚ portal hypertension
  - ⌚ connective tissue disease, e.g. systemic sclerosis
  - ⌚ HIV infection
  - ⌚ congenital heart disease
  - ⌚ sickle cell anaemia
- ⌚ For more information about Pulmonary hypertension visit: [www.phauk.org](http://www.phauk.org) or to make a donation to The Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA UK) visit:

<http://www.phauk.org/get-involved-with-the-pha-uk/make-a-donation/>

**About Andrea:**

Andrea Murphy qualified as a Staff Nurse in 2005 and specialised in trauma orthopaedics on Pierce ward. She joined the RUH in 1997 in Main Outpatients department as a Health Care Assistant.