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Helping patients stay connected with their loved ones

Patients at the Royal United Hospitals Bath can still connect with their loved ones even with COVID-19 visiting restrictions in place thanks to the Trust introducing a mobile phone on every ward.

Since providing the service, many patients have been able to keep in touch with their relatives, including those who find it difficult to use technology, with staff on hand to help them.

Sharon Manhi, Lead for Patient and Carer Experience, RUH said:

“We recognise this is a difficult time for all our patients, their families and carers, and as visiting is currently restricted we want to do everything we can to keep our patients connected with their loved ones. Having these mobile phones not only provides relief to patients, they also provide great comfort to their loved ones.

“We have also set up a messaging service to help patients and families keep in touch. So far over 40 messages have been sent to us from families and we write them out on a lovely card which is delivered to the ward by our in-house postal service.”

With the use of Whatsapp video messaging via the hospital’s free Wi-Fi, staff are seeing the positive impact that video and phone calls are having on their patients.

Helen Slocombe, ward manager on Combe ward said: “The phones are of great value to our patients. Earlier in the week we’ve witnessed some very emotional and heart-warming conversations between patients and their loved ones.”

The phones are also helping to provide comfort to families of loved ones who are nearing their end of life. Helen Meehan, Lead Nurse Palliative Care and End of Life said:

“We always try to support patients nearing end of life to be with their families, if this is their wish. However, as we are now living in these exceptional circumstances we are supporting visiting for patients nearing end of life where possible, but visiting arrangements may be limited.

“That’s why having one of these mobile phones is so important, we can help patients and their families be together virtually so they can share precious time together. We know this time is hard

for so many families and we are doing our best to support them. Every patient matters, every family matters and we are doing our best to support each and every one.”

Families wishing to send a message to their loved one should email their message to ruh-tr.keepingintouch@nhs.net or call 01225 826984. You will need to provide the patient's name, date of birth, location or ward if known, your details and your relationship to the patient.

For more information visit www.ruh.nhs.uk

Ends

Notes to Editor:

The World Health Organization has announced that 2020 will be the Year of the Nurse and Midwife to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. Our nurses and midwives are a big part of the RUH family and throughout the year we will be celebrating the work they do, going above and beyond every day to give our patients compassionate care.

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