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Communications Department

Royal United Hospital
Combe Park
Bath
BA1 3NG

Tel: 01225 826230 / 821459
Mobile: 07557 756658 (office hours)

Ruh-tr.communicationteam@nhs.net

www.ruh.nhs.uk

<https://twitter.com/RUHBath>

Media Release

Tea and tunes mark World Alzheimer's Day at the RUH

A tea party complete with cake, bunting and music marked World Alzheimer's Day at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust on Monday (21 September).

The socially-distanced event took place in Combe ward's garden, with music provided by the RUH's in-house musician Frankie Simpkins who played a selection of well-known tunes on the flute.

It was the first time Frankie had returned to the hospital since March due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Bath Radio supported the event with an on-air conversation with Sarah Williams Martin of Dementia Action Alliance and by playing a range of hits from the '50s '60s and '70s. Wards across the RUH were encouraged to play the music for patients to enjoy and sing along to.

Around 75% of the RUH's patients are over 65 and of that patient group, around 30% are living with dementia – but may be in hospital for other treatment.

Combe ward is a dedicated older persons' unit (OPU) and many of the patients treated on the ward have some form of dementia or cognitive impairment.

Nursing stations are placed in each of the bays on the ward, so that staff can observe patients and patients can be reassured by their presence. Brightly-coloured flooring marks out the different areas of the ward and signs have both text and pictures. The lighting on the ward is soft and even, and changes gradually throughout the day to give patients a sense of the passing of time.

Helen Slocombe, Combe ward Senior Sister, said: "The tea party was a lovely event and was really appreciated by our patients, who got to enjoy a slice of cake while listening to beautiful music – even the sun made an appearance too."

“Events like this are really important for our patients’ welfare, it helps to evoke memories and gives them a chance to interact with each other and have fun.”

The RUH has a Dementia Coordinator team that provides a seven-day service to support the hospital in caring for patients with dementia. They support staff, patients and their family or carer during their stay in hospital through to discharge.

The team, which was a finalist in last year’s National Dementia Care Awards, promotes the support available at the RUH for people with dementia, works closely with local mental health services and the local community and delivers Trust-wide dementia training.

Patients with dementia can listen to audiobooks, plays and TV and radio shows during their stay at the RUH. The shows are loaded onto an easy to use audio player which is given to the patient, along with a pair of headphones so as not to disturb other patients.

COVID-19 has meant the hospital has not been able to run its usual arts and music programme, so patients across the hospital are being given free arts and crafts packs to help keep them entertained during their stay.

The packs – created by Art at the Heart, the RUH's arts charity, and supported by the Patient Experience team - give patients the chance to have a go at some creative activities while helping to alleviate the boredom of a hospital stay

The packs include items such as paint sets, coloured pencils, origami, sketch books, colouring sheets, word searches, knitting and cross stitch kits. Each of the packs is individually sealed and for single patient use only.

In the Children's Ward, there are additional arts and crafts activities available, including modelling clay.

To compliment the activity packs, hundreds of Boredom Buster newspapers have been distributed across the hospital. The tabloid-size newspaper contains a range of stimulating activities, including puzzles, poetry, songs and ideas for creative writing, alongside factual articles.

Ends

Notes to Editor:

The World Health Organization has designated 2020 as 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 are 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

Chair:
Alison Ryan

Chief Executive:
Cara Charles-Barks

