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Media Release

Don't ignore cancer symptoms, warn RUH's lung cancer specialists

Cancer nurses from the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust are urging people not to ignore the early signs and symptoms of lung cancer.

Macmillan Lung Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialists at the RUH say fear of Covid-19 is still preventing some people from visiting their GP and hospital, resulting in a late diagnosis.

As part of Lung Cancer Awareness Month this November, the RUH and Macmillan Cancer Support are raising awareness of the early signs and symptoms of lung cancer and urging people to visit their GP if they have any concerns.

Lung Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist Ros Goldsmith said: "I think some people are still nervous about going to their GP, or into hospital for tests, due to Covid-19 so they're ignoring the possible earlier symptoms of lung cancer which is really concerning."

The symptoms of lung cancer may include:

- A cough or hoarse voice for three weeks or more
- A change in a cough you have had for a long time
- A chest infection that does not get better, or repeated chest infections
- Feeling breathless and wheezy for no reason
- Coughing up blood
- Chest pain or shoulder pain that does not get better.
- Weight loss for no obvious reason
- Feeling extremely tired

Ros added: “While we are living with Covid-19 it’s even more important for people to be vigilant and proactive when it comes to their health. It is vital to visit your GP if you have a persistent cough which lasts three weeks or more.”

Lung cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK with around 48,500 people being diagnosed with it each year.

Patients with inoperable lung cancer can now benefit from a new form of radiotherapy treatment being provided by the RUH, which can improve cancer cure rates.

Lung cancer is only operable in around 18% of patients, mainly due to a higher disease prevalence in patients who are smokers, who often have cardiac or respiratory health conditions which rule out surgery.

The new radiotherapy treatment - Stereotactic Ablative Radiotherapy (SABR) – uses between three to eight high dose radiotherapy sessions to treat early stage, medically inoperable lung cancer.

This is in contrast to conventional radiotherapy treatment, where between 20 and 30 treatments are typically needed.

As well as needing fewer visits to the hospital, patients who have SABR treatment have also been found to have fewer side effects.

If you are concerned about lung cancer contact your GP or call the Macmillan support line on 0808 808 0000 open Mon-Sun, 8am- 8pm. You can also find out more information about the signs and symptoms of lung cancer at www.macmillan.org.uk

Ends

Notes to Editor:

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

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