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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
www.twitter.com/RUHBath

Media Release

Super Rehab research programme praised by patients

An innovative lifestyle intervention called Super Rehab, which has been trialled at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust, has been praised for helping to halt the progression of heart disease.

Lead by the RUH's cardiovascular research team, working in partnership with the University of Bath, and with support from RUHX, the hospital's charity, Super Rehab is all about testing the impact of a high-level, well-resourced one-to-one support programme for patients with heart disease.

It offers more than just advice, providing a tailored diet and exercise programme personalised to the individual with support to make sure the changes are practical and can become part of a daily routine.

Super Rehab is being offered to patients earlier in the evolution of their forms of heart disease than other rehab programmes, aiming to halt its progression, help patients feel better, and potentially even reverse the disease process and turn the clock back.

In the first phase of the research, which has now concluded, if a CT scan showed that a patient was at risk of developing cardiovascular disease, or at risk of a heart attack, they were offered the chance to join the Super Rehab study.

Patients were offered Super Rehab in addition to standard treatments for their heart disease, and the research team is collaborating with researchers at the University of Oxford to track the impact using the very latest heart imaging techniques and industry partners for heart rhythm monitoring, alongside blood tests and fitness tests.

Barbara Hathaway, 75, from Corsham, is one patient who has benefitted first hand from the project.

Barbara said: “I came in for a check-up at the RUH as I’d been experiencing chest pains and was asked whether I would like to take part in Super Rehab.

“I’ve always been a believer that prevention is better than cure, so thought why not?”

“I was given some kit, including a blood pressure monitor, and was also put in touch with a dietician and a personal trainer, who was based at the University of Bath.

“The first time I went to the gym at the University I was a bit overwhelmed – it was full of young, fit people and I thought ‘what am I doing here?!’

“I soon got into it though and began to really enjoy it and look forward to my visits.

“I went to the gym twice a week and was regularly weighed and measured. I was also seeing a dietician at the RUH who gave me lots of advice on what I was eating and asked me to complete a food diary.”

Barbara said she felt the support she’d had through Super Rehab had made a massive difference to her health.

“I have no doubt that it’s saved me from having to have a major operation further down the line,” she said.

“The whole programme was tailored to me perfectly and I lost weight and improved my overall fitness too.

“The programme was fantastic, as were all the staff I met at the RUH and the University – everyone was so supportive and I’m so grateful to them all.”

Barabara was among the patients, clinical staff, researchers and members of the public who recently attended a packed Cardiovascular Research Showcase at the RUH, which celebrated the success of the project and the collaborative working between the RUH and the University.

The research has been running two studies, one for coronary heart disease and one for atrial fibrillation, involving around 75 patients across both studies.

Dr Ali Khavandi, Consultant Cardiologist at the RUH, said: “The feedback we’ve received from patients taking part in the study has been really positive.

“We’ve seen first-hand how many of them have lost a significant amount of weight and reduced their visceral fat, which is found around organs and can be dangerous.

“They have also improved their overall fitness and made really positive lifestyle changes that will really help their overall health and fitness.

“I’m delighted the project has been such a success and I’m excited to see the next phase of our work with a Heart UK-funded study that has just started, offering Super Rehab to our patients with microvascular angina.”

As well as Dr Ali Khavandi, the research team includes Dr Jonathan Rodrigues, RUH Consultant Cardiothoracic Radiologist & Honorary Senior Lecturer at the University of Bath, Prof Dylan Thompson, Professor of Human Physiology at the University of Bath, Prof Fiona Gillison, Professor of Behavioural Psychology at the University of Bath, Dr Theresa Smith, Senior Lecturer in Statistics at the University of Bath, and Dr John Graby, Dr David Murphy and Dr Joanna Abramik, all Cardiology Clinical Research Fellows at the RUH.

Dr Dylan Thompson, Professor of Human Physiology at the University of Bath and Co-Director of the university’s Centre for Nutrition, Exercise and Metabolism, said: “Super Rehab is a great example of how we can combine the expertise of clinical teams with that of academics based in universities to improve patient care through collaboration.”

Rhyannon Boyd, Associate Director of RUHX, which has funded the Super Rehab project said: “RUHX are delighted to support this vital research to help patients make positive lifestyle changes that will really help their overall health and fitness. RUHX exist to support the RUH offer extra extraordinary care, in this case through the innovative preventative Super Rehab programme, that can improve people’s lives and avoid lifechanging and costly treatments later when patients’ heart health has deteriorated.”

You can find out lots more information about the Super Rehab project on the RUH website: [Royal United Hospitals Bath | Further Info \(ruh.nhs.uk\)](#) and [watch this video](#) which explains what Super Rehab is all about.

To support further innovative research at the RUH, please visit [ruh.org.uk](#)

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Notes to Editor:

At the RUH we’re proud to put people at the heart of what we do, striving to create an environment where everyone matters. Everyone means the people we care for, the people we work with and the people in our community.

We provide a wide range of services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.

We also provide specialist services for rheumatology, chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome/ME via the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases which we acquired in 2015.

In 2021, we acquired Sulis Hospital Bath, an independent hospital that provides care for both private and NHS patients. This has enabled us to provide more care for NHS patients, as well as continuing to provide private care



to those who choose it. Any additional income earned through private care is reinvested in services for the benefit of the people we care for at both Sulis and the RUH.

Our new Dyson Cancer Centre brings together many of the RUH's cancer services under one roof to provide a cancer services hub for over 500,000 people in the South West. The centre includes the RUH's oncology, chemotherapy and radiotherapy services, a 22-bed inpatient ward, a dedicated pharmacy, research team and nuclear medicine and physics teams.

A key feature of the new centre is the Macmillan Wellbeing Hub. The three-storey hub provides a welcoming, non-clinical space designed around the needs of patients and their families. It also includes comfortable accommodation where relatives and loved ones can stay overnight.

We work closely with other health and care organisations as members of the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board. We strive to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in our community by working together build one of the healthiest places to live and work.

We are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

For more information about the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk