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Media Release

RUH patient calls on women to check for signs of gynaecological cancer

September is Gynaecological Cancer Awareness Month and a patient treated for the cancer at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust is calling on women to get themselves checked out if they have any unusual symptoms.

Mavis Bennett had been suffering with an irritation around her vaginal area and had tried numerous over the counter treatments which hadn't worked.

It was then she went to her GP, who found what looked like a small boil or abscess and referred her to the gynaecology team at the RUH.

Mavis said: "They got me in really quickly, gave me a thorough examination and told me it was vulval cancer.

"I was just devastated. When you are told something like that it just turns your world upside down."

Mavis, from Hinton Charterhouse, underwent surgery at the RUH which was initially successful. However, she continued to have regular biopsies as an outpatient and a year later was told the cancer had returned and she would need further surgery.

The second operation took place at Southmead Hospital in Bristol where she also had a skin graft.

"It was an incredibly stressful time, the worry and anxiety was terrible" said Mavis. "I was just very fortunate that the care I received both at the RUH and at Southmead was excellent. I was so well supported the whole way."

Mavis returned home where she was supported by carers for two weeks while she recovered.

She now attends a regular support group at the RUH's Dyson Cancer Centre for people who have had cancer.

"It's so nice to be able to talk to people who know what you've been through," she said. "They've all had similar experiences, so it's really helpful to just sit and chat.

"My message to women who are having unusual symptoms is please don't be embarrassed. If anything just doesn't feel right get to your GP straight away.

"The earlier you can get diagnosed and treated, the better things will be for you."

Vulval cancer is rare but can affect anyone born with a vulva, this includes women, trans men and people assigned female at birth.

Symptoms of vulval cancer can include things like a lump; a sore, growth (this may look and feel like a wart) or ulcer; bleeding and itching that does not get better.

These symptoms are very common and can be caused by many different conditions. Having them does not definitely mean you have vulval cancer but it's important to get them checked by a GP.

This is because if they're caused by cancer, finding it early means treatment is more likely to be successful.

You can find more information on the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vulval-cancer/symptoms/>

There's lots more information and support about gynaecological cancer on the Macmillan Cancer Support website: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-awareness/gynaecological-cancer-awareness-month>

Ends

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.



Royal United Hospitals Bath

NHS Foundation Trust

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