



02.07.2026

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Media Release

The RUH supports pioneering research to improve early diagnosis of endometriosis

The Royal United Hospitals (RUH) Bath NHS Foundation Trust has supported promising early-stage research aimed at improving how endometriosis is diagnosed.

Endometriosis affects around 1 in 10 women and people with a uterus in the UK, yet diagnosis takes eight – nine years on average. Currently, confirmation often requires a laparoscopy (keyhole surgery), as MRI and ultrasounds scans can struggle to identify the most common forms of the condition in its earlier stages.

RUH staff contributed to the pilot DETECT study, led by the University of Oxford and supported by Serac Healthcare, which explored whether a new imaging technique could help detect endometriosis earlier and reduce the need for diagnostic surgery.

The RUH – which is part of BSW Hospitals Group – was invited to take part in the study due to its state-of-the-art SPECT-CT scanner and the team's expertise in using this technology. This meant that all 19 study participants had their scans carried out at the RUH.

Staff at the RUH designed, developed and reviewed the study scans, and advised on using the technology. The tests investigated whether an experimental tracer called 99mTc-maraciclatide could detect new blood vessel growth on the CT scan, as this is a feature often associated with early-stage endometriosis.

Sarah Cade, Head of Medical Physics and Bioengineering at the RUH, said: "We were pleased to support this important early-stage research. By designing and developing a tailored scanning protocol, we were able to explore whether this technology could help identify endometriosis in a different way. While further research is needed, the early findings are encouraging."

The scans undertaken at the RUH were found to align well with the surgeons' findings during planned diagnostic surgery. This suggests that the new scanning technique could, in the future, support earlier diagnosis of endometriosis.

Professor Krina Zondervan, Head of Department at the Nuffield Department of Women's and Reproductive Health at the University of Oxford, said: "The most prevalent subtype of

endometriosis currently evades reliable detection, leaving women no choice for diagnosis other than invasive surgery. If these results are confirmed in larger phase 3 studies, imaging with maraciclalide could transform clinical research and practice and potentially empower the development of treatments for women across the globe.”

Professor Richard Graham, Research and Development Director for BSW Hospitals Group, Consultant Radiologist at the RUH and a coauthor of the study, said: “We are delighted to have been invited to take part in this important pilot study.

“Research is extremely important to all hospitals in BSW Hospitals Group, and evidence shows that patients treated in research-active hospitals have better outcomes, even if they are not participating in a study. The RUH is also one of the most research active hospitals of its size in the UK, something we are very proud of.

“Being part of the DETECT study reflects our commitment to research that benefits our wider community and to working in partnership with academic colleagues. We are also pleased to be supporting research that aims to improve women’s health.”

This is very early stage research and further studies are planned to confirm the effectiveness of the research and determine whether it can be introduced more widely. David Hail, CEO of Serac Healthcare, said: “With FDA Fast Track Designation and agreed Phase III study designs, we are now advancing to validate these findings in larger trials and progress to regulatory submission.”

This means that, while the scan is not currently part of NHS care, the findings so far represent an important step towards reducing delays in diagnosis and in helping people affected by endometriosis access answers, support and care sooner.

The study is not currently seeking new participants.

Ends

Notes to Editor

Information on endometriosis

Endometriosis is a long-term condition where tissue similar to the lining of the womb grows in other parts of the body, including the ovaries and fallopian tubes. It can be life-altering, causing severe pain, heavy periods, fatigue and fertility problems.

Endometriosis symptoms to watch out for:

- Severe period pain that stops you doing normal activities
- Heavy periods
- Extreme tiredness
- Pain in the lower abdomen, back and pelvic area
- Pain when urinating or pooing

- Pain during or after sex
- Pain or bleeding in other areas, including the chest
- Difficulties getting pregnant
- Low mood

BSW Hospitals Group

BSW Hospitals Group is a formal partnership between Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust and Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust. The three care organisations have been formally working together since May 2025, and have a shared ambition to make a difference to colleagues, patients and their families and wider communities across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon, Wiltshire (BSW) and beyond.

About the RUH

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



Royal United Hospitals Bath
NHS Foundation Trust

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