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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.communicationsteam@nhs.net
www.ruh.nhs.uk
www.twitter.com/RUHBath

Media Release

Nearly 40 RUH staff join stem cell donor register after nurse shares her donation story

A nurse at the Royal United Hospitals (RUH) Bath who donated her stem cells to help save the life of someone she had never met has inspired dozens of colleagues to take action themselves.

Nearly 40 members of hospital staff signed up to the stem cell donor register at a 'swabbing' event held at the RUH in July. This was organised by Clinical Trials Nurse Jansen Dela Cruz, in partnership with blood cancer and disorders charity DKMS, following her own experience donating stem cells earlier this year – which she shared was one of the proudest moments of her life.

Increasing the number of people on the donor register helps to improve the chances of patients with blood cancer and other serious blood disorders finding a potentially life-saving match.

Jansen, who works in the RUH's oncology team, was motivated to sign up to the stem cell donor register following her experiences of cancer both professionally and personally.

She said: "I'm working day-to-day with cancer patients and I've got relatives who had cancer and who have passed away. So it's a really important cause for me."

Several years after joining the register, Jansen received a call from DKMS to say she was a potential match for a patient in need of a transplant. Following medical checks, DKMS made arrangements for her to travel to a clinic in London to donate her stem cells.

For most donors, including Jansen, stem cell donation is a straightforward outpatient procedure that takes just a few hours. For patients with blood cancer and other disorders, however, it can offer a second chance at life.

Only around one in three patients will find a matching donor in their family, making volunteer donors on the register essential.

Although strict regulations protect the identity of donors and recipients, Jansen knows that her stem cells were put straight on a plane across the Atlantic and received by an older man in North America.

Reflecting on the experience, Jansen said:

"I hope that after the stem cell transplant, he will be living his best life and ticking all the boxes in his bucket list of things to do. And enjoying time with his family.

"I highly encourage everyone to sign up, as it increases the chances of people getting matched. Saving someone's life is one of the proudest moments that you could ever experience."

Inspired by her experience, Jansen wanted to give her colleagues the opportunity to sign up and potentially make the same life-changing difference.

Almost forty members of staff joined up at the event, reflecting the compassion and commitment that RUH staff bring not only to their work within the hospital, but also to supporting patients and communities beyond it.

The initiative is another example of the many ways that RUH staff help to improve lives, whether through the care they provide every day or by taking action that could help save the life of someone they may never meet.

Anyone aged 16 – 55 who is in general good health can join the stem cell donor register through DKMS by completing some simple, painless mouth swabs and answering a few general health questions.

Anyone inspired by Jansen's story can order a free home swab kit through the DKMS website: www.dkms.org.uk/register-now

Ends

Notes to Editor

About stem cell donation

- At any one time, around 2,000 people in the UK are searching for a matching stem cell donor
- Blood cancers are the third most common cause of cancer death in the UK
- Only around one in three patients finds a suitable donor within their family.
- People aged 16-55 who are in general good health can join the stem cell register through DKMS.

About DKMS

DKMS is one of the most significant non-profit organisations in the world dedicated to the fight against blood cancer. Founded in Germany in 1991 by Dr Peter Harf, DKMS and the organisation's over 1,500 employees have since relentlessly pursued the aim of giving as many patients as possible a second chance at life. With more than 13.5 million registered donors, DKMS has succeeded in doing this over 135,000 times to date by providing blood stem cell donations to those in need. This accomplishment has led to DKMS becoming the global leader in the facilitation of unrelated blood stem cell transplants. The organisation has offices in

Germany, the US, Poland, the UK, Chile, South Africa and India. International expansion and collaboration are key to helping patients worldwide because, like the organisation itself, blood cancer knows no borders. DKMS is also heavily involved in the fields of medicine and science, with its own research unit focused on continually improving the survival and recovery rate of patients. www.dkms.org.uk

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 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