Royal United Hospitals Bath
NHS Foundation Trust

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Media Release

RUH cancer patients to benefit from quicker treatment

A new immunotherapy jab which has slashed the treatment time for some cancer patients is now being offered at the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust.

The new injectable form of pembrolizumab, a type of immunotherapy, takes around five minutes to administer, compared to at least 30mins for an infusion, meaning that many patients can now spend less time in hospital.

The switch to injections also means more patients can be treated on the RUH's Medlock Unit. Both patients and nurses say they prefer the jab to the infusion, with patients reporting fewer side effects too.

The jab can be used to treat 14 different cancer types, including lung, breast, head and neck, and cervical and works by triggering immune cells to recognise and kill cancer cells.

The injection is being rolled out nationally, but the RUH is amongst the first hospitals to offer it to patients.

Jo Parkes, RUH Pharmacy Clinical Lead for Cancer Services, said: "It's great that we're now able to offer many of our cancer patients this option for treatment.

"The feedback we've had from patients has been overwhelmingly positive. People really appreciate how quickly the injection can be given compared with an infusion and that they now spend less time in hospital overall.

"Patients have told us they feel less stressed by the experience and how it's freed up more of their time for important day to day activities, like getting back to work and parents being able to make the school run."

Shannon Nally, Specialist Cancer Services Pharmacist added: “This really is fantastic news for so many of our cancer patients and I’m delighted that the RUH is one of the first hospitals to be offering this treatment, it reflects our commitment to consistently delivering the highest quality care for the people we care for.”

Pembrolizumab works by blocking a protein called PD-1, which acts as a break on immune responses, releasing the immune system to recognise and attack cancer cells.

You can find out lots more information about pembrolizumab and its administration on the Macmillan Cancer website.

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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 NHS services for the benefit of the people we care for.

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