

Pulse

April 2021

Chair's welcome

Hello everyone, although we are well into spring, the onset of snow this morning just brought us back to a reality that we still have some time to go to summer. Similarly, the end of Covid. Things have improved dramatically in the last month and both the number of patients with Covid and the level of vaccinations are very encouraging, but we do just need to keep on top of it. Please, everyone, if you have are advised to, and have an invitation to take up the vaccine, do it.

Our Trust is now doing its very best to recover more traditional activity and I am pleased to say that this is moving at pace and we should be able to catch up on the backlog in the months ahead.

I hope we can look forward to a good summer where some of the activity and freedoms we had in the past will return, albeit in a world where Covid will still be present and we'll still need to be careful.

Graham Sims

HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

An online book of condolence has been opened at the Trust to enable staff and patients to leave their thoughts and messages on the death of the Duke of Edinburgh. It can be accessed [here](#).

Cancer team pioneer new treatment

Pioneering radiotherapy technology, which will revolutionise the way some cancer patients are treated, has been launched at the Berkshire Cancer Centre (BCC).

It's called SABR – Stereotactic Ablative Body Radiotherapy – and studies have shown it can be more effective than traditional radiotherapy for some cancers because it delivers a far more powerful, targeted beam of high energy X-rays directly to a tumour. Initially it will be used to treat lung cancer patients.

In a separate move, BCC has become the first NHS site in the South of England to introduce Surface Guided Radiation Therapy (SGRT). This technology eliminates the need for

permanent markers, like tattoos, on a patient's body to aid treatment. SGRT halts the beam if a patient moves during radiotherapy so the tumour is always within the intended treatment area. There's full details [here](#)



Royal Berks Charity new look

As we emerge from an incredibly challenging year, the Royal Berks Charity has unveiled a 'new look' with a refreshed branding. This is to raise the Charity's profile, highlight its commitment to raise funds that add extra value for patients and to support pioneering and innovative work.

The Charity provides vital funds to help enhance the experience of patients and staff, and support the Trust to drive improvement in patient care.

There's more information on the work of the charity and how you can support it here <https://www.royalberkscharity.co.uk/>. Or you can ring on 0118 322 8860 or drop a line to charity@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.

Stroke pilot rolled out across 39 hospitals

High tech AI technology which the RBH piloted last year is now being rolled out for use by 39 hospitals across five stroke networks in England and Scotland.

The RBH was the first hospital in the Thames Valley to start using the AI software in March 2020, and last month the hospital's lead stroke consultant Dr Kiruba Nagaratnam was interviewed by The Times about the work.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ai-gives-doctors-second-opinion-on-stroke-cases-z2vzxnp02>

The software is being used in the Emergency Department (ED) to help clinicians quickly diagnose stroke. It analyses CT images of the brain and blood vessels immediately after the patient has a scan and automatically highlights the area of probable damage and the blocked blood vessel. This means it acts as an expert second opinion and helps the physicians make faster treatment decisions and, where necessary, fast forward patients to specialist centres for clot retrieval treatment.

Long Covid Clinic

Dr Deepak Ravindran, the RBH's Lead Clinician for long covid and GP Dr Elizabeth Mottram from Thatcham Medical Practice spoke about the symptoms, impact and support around long covid at a virtual meeting organised by Community United West Berkshire this month.

The RBH was one of the first hospitals in the country to set up a long covid clinic last November and latest figures show 263 referrals with 190 triaged and 70 people seen at the clinic. A further breakdown of the figures shows 68% were women and 15% from ethnic minorities. The main symptoms are fatigue (95%), short of breath (82%), concentration problems (72%), pain (64%), depression (65%) anxiety (50%).

Walk in Centre changes

The 'walk-in' element at Reading's Walk in Centre has been temporarily suspended pending a public consultation around new models of access to primary care and the implications of a possible permanent cessation of the walk in element. The move does not affect patients registered at the Centre. The walk in service recently introduced a booked appointment system via NHS 111 but patient numbers have been very low, at around 130 patients a week, and GPs on site say many of those attending could be dealt with over the telephone or within core primary care services.

The public consultation will seek to capture people's views about the wider use of primary care services, determine how, or where, people would opt to access same day care and understand their awareness of the alternative healthcare options available. It is due to start in early May.

Healthcare Science team reach out to schools

The Trust is hosting a special live webinar for schools and colleges later this month (22 April) to raise awareness of careers in healthcare science.

It will feature practical demonstrations, a video and brief presentations from scientists and trainee scientists talking about the different aspects of healthcare science including Ultrasound, Radiotherapy Physics, Audiology, Cardiac Science, Respiratory Science and Clinical Engineering. The event has been funded by the Royal Berks Charity.

Vaccine update

The BOB ICS – Integrated Care Partnership – is set to hit the one million jobs mark this week.

Closer to home, figures released on Monday showed 5,646 Trust staff have received their first dose and 4,077 their second one. In total, the vaccination centre at the RBH has delivered 8,445 individual jabs. It has also vaccinated 68 high risk patients including 12 with a second dose who are due to start immunotherapy.

The Trust and its Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) partners are also continuing work around vaccine hesitancy. Dr Rupa Joshi, Co Clinical Director for Wokingham North PCN had an article published in a recent edition of Asian Voice newspaper. <https://www.asian-voice.com/News/UK/GP-trying-to-increase-Covid-vaccine-uptake-among-diaspora>. She also ran a pop up vaccination site at the Aisha Mosque, Woodley last week. Two hundred people

were jabbed during this event, and a further 60 people had their vaccination at a similar session at Christ the King, Whitley. There's a short film here taken at the Mosque.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyqAbmeQk14>

Meanwhile, Trust staff nurse Bernice Boore recently filmed a short video with Reading Borough Council encouraging vaccine uptake, which is being shared across health and social care partners in Berkshire West. <https://youtu.be/1CqdZ1BTgfk>

Healthwatch GP phone survey

Reading's Healthwatch has launched a short survey asking people about their experiences when ringing their local surgery. The findings will be shared with local doctors to help identify areas for improvement. Click this [link](#) to complete online, or call Healthwatch on 07786 476 257 to complete over the phone. Closing date is April 25

Clinical Placements Expansion Programme

Covid restrictions have led to a national shortage of student placements so since February work has been done with teams in Physiotherapy, Occupational Health, and Speech and Language Therapy to see how placements in the Trust can be improved and expanded. Early successes include the introduction of a weekly peer student meeting to share feedback, experiences and receive training and support. The programme will run for ten months.

Public Governor Report

My name is Kevin Boyle and I am in the third year of my term as an elected public governor for Reading. I am retired, after spending nearly 30 years with ICI Ltd as an industrial chemist and ten years as a management systems auditor with Lloyds Register.

My role is to help represent the views of the Reading public and to appoint and call to account, the non-executive directors of the Trust. In doing so, I have sought assurances on: better access for the disabled to the RBH buildings, better treatment for staff under stress in the phlebotomy service, maintaining access to hydrotherapy, retaining a neuro-rehab ward at the RBH, easier drop-off of cardiac monitors, the management of health and safety at the RBH during construction projects, maintaining dual access by partners to maternity and pre-natal services during the Covid 19 pandemic and more recently, the need for early resolution of the security staff's pay dispute with Kingdom.

My links with various organisations help me gauge issues of public concern and these include the South Reading Patient Voice group, Healthwatch Reading and my own GP surgery at Melrose Reading.

Over the last twelve months, governors have met with the Chair of the Trust, Graham Sims and some directors, via Zoom, on a regular basis. We have sought assurances on the treatment of patients and the wellbeing of staff and been very impressed by reports of a high level of performance, by both management and staff. As someone with two daughters and a son working elsewhere for the NHS, I am only too aware of the stresses and strains Covid 19

has placed on everybody. I am in awe of their professionalism and resilience under such conditions and hope that they will all be duly rewarded.