



Pulse magazine

October
2024

Welcome!

Hello to you all and welcome to the October edition of Pulse.

I have recently joined the Board of Directors at the Trust and have relied upon Pulse to give me insights into Trust news. It is always full of interesting articles and developments and this month is no exception.

Last weekend I had an unfortunate encounter with a step ladder, my toe came off worse. However, the excellent service at the Minor Injury Unit had me seen, sorted and strapped in no time.

I have had the pleasure of working in many hospitals up and down the country and I can honestly say that what happens here at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust every day is remarkable care, delivered with compassion and kindness.

Enjoy reading this edition of Pulse!

Catherine McLaughlin
Non-Executive Director



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£1.2 million grant to improve early detection of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases



As part of a team led by Henley Business School at University of Reading, we have been awarded a £1.2 million grant for the development of a machine learning system to significantly improve the early detection and referral of

rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMD). The three-year project will fully develop the product ready for regulatory approval, and will be piloted both in our Trust and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

With up to one-third of the UK population affected by RMD, these diseases, including inflammatory arthritis (IA), are a leading cause of disability and one of the biggest contributors to sick days and unemployment. The need for accurate identification is critical, yet IA can be difficult to detect and can present with non-specific symptoms.

Professor Weizi (Vicky) Li, project lead and Professor of Informatics and Digital Health at Henley, said: "With an estimated annual cost of £1.8 billion in sick leave and work-related disability for rheumatoid arthritis alone, the current RMD referral system faces huge challenges.

"Our machine-learning system presents a new approach to RMD referrals. Unlike existing solutions, which often rely on the advice and guidance from already stretched rheumatology specialists, we're introducing a machine learning-based decision support system which will enable doctors to refer patients more accurately and promptly, ultimately leading to quicker and more effective treatment."

With only 40 per cent accuracy in suspected early IA referrals by GPs in 2019-2021, there is a significant burden on clinicians who must sift through large volumes of referrals and attend unnecessary appointments. Delays in assessing referrals contribute to delayed patient access to the right clinics and treatments and often result in repeated GP consultations.

Dr Antoni Chan, project co-lead and Consultant Rheumatologist and Physician at RBFT, adds: "This project represents a major step forward in the early detection and referral of RMD, promising improved patient outcomes, reduced healthcare costs and increased efficiency across our healthcare system.

"Developed using available patient referral data, the tool has so far demonstrated significantly higher accuracy during experiments at RBFT than existing clinical criteria and clinicians' assessments. With this grant, we fully expect to be on track for regulatory approval at the end of three years."

Kelly and Sidney's organ donation story



Last month we featured Deb and Helen's experiences of helping others after their brother Stephen passed away. This month we're sharing Sidney and Kelly's story, father and daughter from Buckinghamshire. Starting with Kelly's perspective.

Kelly's story

"I'm stubborn, my whole family would agree on that. And I'm also the youngest sibling, so I've always been someone who watches what's going on around me, as that's how I learnt growing up. That meant when I knew I could help dad, I was always going to step in, and no one was going to talk me out of it.

"My dad Sidney is many things, a great dad, a brilliant granddad, a vintage Jaguar enthusiast, a musician, and very much an extrovert. Everything about his life changed after a routine workplace health check.

"Even though he felt fine, Dad was referred to hospital, and after months of controlling his health with medication, was diagnosed with kidney failure. The weeks, months, and years that followed were spent either in hospital, driving to and from hospital, on dialysis at home, going through a kidney transplant which would fail after less than a year, and finally going back on dialysis again. This time though it was in hospital, for four hours a day, every other day, for years. To say it was exhausting would be an understatement – it was all-consuming. Throughout all of this he was supported by his wonderful partner Joyce.

"In the run up to dad's first transplant, I'd been pregnant and wasn't able to see if I was a match for him. Second time around though, I'd made my mind up, if I was a match, I was going to act as a live donor for my Dad. To help him get well again of course, but to also break that isolation he was having to live in – to get our family back, for my children to be able to spend time with their granddad, to be able to go out for lunch as a family – all the normal things we hadn't been able to do for years.

"So for me, after doing my research, going for regular appointments and checks to make sure I was well to do it and a match, there was no question in my mind."

Kelly and Sidney's organ donation story (continued)

Sidney's story

"My life has changed so much, since my second transplant. I'm still careful, and I'll always have to be. But I'm back with my mates at the Jaguar club, I'm back with my band Kurtis, on the drums, and I can spend time with my whole family again. Life is really good. Kelly is just the same as always, strong, positive, and since the donation has had another baby. As you'd expect, our bond is closer than ever – including a fair few in-jokes, and going out for dinner each year for our transplantversary.



We could not have gone through this without the amazing support of all of our family and friends, and although we tell them often, I hope they know how much we truly mean it. My partner Joyce, has been so strong, day in day out. For example learning to change my dressings, managing my medication - with the emotional support too - she has been my absolute rock. The way she took

things on, I have so much admiration for her - and I honestly don't think I'd still be here if it wasn't for her.

"I still come back to the Royal Berks for check-ups, and it's all going well at the moment, parking in the same spot I did all the times I came in for dialysis. My visits always have a sad element to them though, as it reminds me of all the mates I made during dialysis.

"My friend Brian - died before a match was ever found."

Some are still waiting to find a match, some are now too frail to be able to have one, and others – including my friend Brian - died before a match was ever found for them.

"Organ donation is rare, and being a live organ donor even more unusual - and I know how lucky I am, and what a gift it is. All I'd say is, talk about it, discuss it, so if your family or loved ones do end up in a situation where they have to make a decision, they'll know your wishes and be able to honour them."

[NHS Organ Donation website](https://www.nhs.uk/organ-donation)

Chief Midwifery Awards for maternity workers

Two of our maternity workers have been recognised by NHS England's Chief Midwifery Officer awards for their dedication in providing care.

The Chief Midwifery Awards aims to nationally recognise the vital contribution of maternity support workers by highlighting those who go above and beyond, demonstrating excellence in their roles.

Earlier this month the Trust welcomed Deputy Regional Chief Midwife, Angela Velinor, to surprise maternity support workers Preanka Pradhan and Vanessa Savage with their special awards.

Vanessa was nominated for her support to the Maternity Practice Education Team, and her invaluable experience in sharing her knowledge and regularly checking-in on maternity colleagues.

Preanka was recognised not only for her compassion and care towards mothers on the ward but also her care for colleagues, especially student midwives ensuring they are valued members of the team.

The awards were proudly attended by Christine Harding, Director of Midwifery, "I am so proud of Preanka and Vanessa, they thoroughly deserve to be recognised for the important contribution they make every day to our service users and colleagues."

Congratulations Vanessa and Preanka!

Below: Angela Velinor, Deputy Regional Chief Midwife (middle) presenting awards to maternity support workers Vanessa Savage and Preanka Pradhan



Rolling out stop smoking support to inpatients

We have recently rolled out support to inpatients at the Trust who want to stop smoking. Now, we will offer counselling from a Tobacco Dependency Advisor to any inpatient, in any ward, at any of the Trust's sites and inpatients will be able to request support themselves.



So far we have supported more than 150 patients to stop, with more than three-quarters taking up the offer of Nicotine Replacement Therapy during their stay, and to take home with them afterwards.

Dr Sabrina Black, Respiratory Consultant said, "We know that quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health. And we also know it's not an easy thing to do – especially if you are in an unfamiliar, and stressful environment like a hospital, away from the support network you may have at home to help you quit."

"I'm really pleased that we're now able to make sure that any patient staying with us who smokes, will have support – both in terms of conversation, and also Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help them start their journey to being smoke-free, and all the health benefits that brings with it."

Each year smoking costs the NHS more than £2 billion and causes 80,000 deaths. Two-thirds of people who smoke want to stop, and people who used nicotine replacement therapy are twice as likely to succeed that going it alone. This scheme has been made possible by support from the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Integrated Care Board, as part of their work on preventative health interventions.

The Trust also has a 'Waiting Well' service, which supports people waiting for operations and procedures to improve their overall health during that time, including by stopping smoking, or reducing their alcohol consumption. And the Maternity Department at the Trust also offers tailored support to pregnant women.

Katie Prichard-Thomas, RBFT Chief Nursing Officer said, "Investing in this support for our patients is so important. We've had patients staying with us who have smoked for decades, and after meeting with a member of staff, and getting nicotine replacement therapy, are still smoke-free now they're back at home. No matter how long you've smoked for, stopping is such a positive step for you and those around you."

"And we've also extended this type of support to our own staff too, running monthly face-to-face sessions for them to come along to and start on their own journey, helping them to fit looking after their own health alongside caring for our patients. It's Stoptober this month, so there's never been a better time to stop."

Get vaccinated. Get winter strong

Winter is on its way, and so is the winter illness season. As we head into the colder months, remember that Covid and flu can be especially dangerous for those at higher risk of severe illness.

Make sure you're ready for winter by getting vaccinated, even if you've had flu or Covid or have been vaccinated before.

Protection from previous flu and Covid vaccines fade, and the viruses change over time.

If you're eligible, protect yourself and your loved ones by getting your flu and Covid vaccinations.

Book now on the NHS App or [website](#) and stay safe this winter.



Are you interested in work experience & placements?

The Trust is committed to supporting young people and adults looking to pursue a career in healthcare. We offer clinical and non-clinical placements at set times across the academic year.

Work experience is for people who are interested in an NHS career. Shadowing our teams, you will have the opportunity to see first-hand what is involved in the job role you are considering. It also helps to give an understanding of the attitudes, behaviours and values that are expected in a healthcare setting.

For more information please visit our website: [Work Experience and Placements](#)



Sturti, Getty Images

Thinking about a career in the NHS?

If you would like to join our team we are always looking for talented staff with a commitment to providing the best patient care.

View our live job vacancies on our website: [RBFT work with us](#)

Discounts? Did you know?

healthservice discounts

As a member of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust you are eligible to amazing Health Service Discounts to save money on holidays, electrical goods, meals, goods, meals, days out and more!

To register, follow this link [Register | NHS Discounts | Health Service Discounts](#) and select Foundation Trust Member.

Don't forget to let us know what amazing discounts you get so we can share them! Check out some of this month's exclusive discounts:

- [Quality School Clothing from Trutex](#) -15% off
- [Health Service Cinema Tickets](#) – 40% off
- [Tastecard Exclusive](#) – 12 month FREE membership
- [Virgin Holidays](#) - £125 NHS discount
- [Google Pixel 8 Pro](#) - £29.99 upfront + £41 a month
- [Sports Fashion from Nike](#) – 10% off
- [Haven NHS Discount](#) – 15% off
- [TVs from Samsung](#) – up to 20% off
- [Gifts & Experience Days from Buyagift](#) – 22% off

Get involved and have your say

Open Meetings

Why not come along to one of our upcoming open meetings: find the details and agendas on our trust website page: [Open meetings | Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust](#)

- **Board of Directors – 9am, Wednesday 27 November 2024**
Seminar Room, Trust Education Centre, Royal Berkshire Hospital
- **Council of Governors – 5pm, Wednesday 27 November 2024**
Seminar Room, Trust Education Centre, Royal Berkshire Hospital

Meet your Council of Governors

Find a full list of your Council of Governors on the trust website:

[Council of Governors | Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust](#).

Become a member

Sign up family and friends to become a member via our [online form](#) to receive our latest updates, shape how hospital services are delivered and be eligible to receive our NHS discounts.

Get in touch with the team: Foundation.trust@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Royal Berkshire Hospital park and ride

If you're coming to the Royal Berkshire Hospital, why not avoid the traffic and the car park and take the park and ride?

The 300 bus service runs Monday to Friday from 6am until 7pm buses run up to every 20 minutes, journeys cost £2 per single and parking costs £1 at Mere oak and £1 per hour at Thames Valley Park, capped at £4 per day.



SKIP THE TRAFFIC

Coming to Royal Berkshire Hospital?
Avoid the congestion and use our **new**
300 Park and Ride bus service from
Mere oak and Thames Valley Park

PARK 
 **& RIDE**

Pulse Magazine is written and produced by the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust Communications Team.

If you would like to have an article included or have any feedback just let us know at Communications@royalberkshire.nhs.uk