

Friends newsletter

Introduction

Over the past ten months, King Edward VII's Hospital has faced one of its biggest challenges and, although we are not over it yet, I wanted to share with you the commitment and professionalism of our staff during that period.

As you may have been aware, the hospital suspended all non-urgent private treatment from 23rd March in order to give the NHS the capacity it needed to respond to the initial health crisis generated by the pandemic. I am tremendously proud of the role that King Edward VII's Hospital played in partnering with the NHS. The Hospital acted without hesitation and provided world class, life-saving medical care to over 760 critically ill NHS patients.

Our efforts were recognised in a recent Independent Healthcare Provider Network (IHPN) report on how the independent sector has worked successfully with the NHS during the COVID-19 pandemic:

"King Edward VII's Hospital responded to the call from the NHS within 48 hours, turning over all resources in the fight against COVID-19 and admitting its first NHS patients on March 23rd, as the UK went into lockdown. From the outset, the hospital was committed to serving the NHS at pace, in any way it could."

I was also very proud to read some of the wonderful comments NHS patients have left in our May patient satisfaction survey, one said: "I will never forget this experience in all my life, it was the best."

I would expect nothing less of our outstanding teams. In these challenging times I am delighted to see the hospital's values of professionalism, quality, respect, safety and teamwork not only being continued, but strengthened.

I would also like to commend those who volunteered to work at the NHS Nightingale Hospital. I was not at all surprised by the number of staff that put themselves forward.

On 7th September, the decision was taken by NHS England to end the national contract in London that had been in place throughout the pandemic. At present, it is business as usual for the Hospital, following the government's clear message that the public should continue to access healthcare throughout this period, although we stand ready to assist our local NHS Trusts if the need arises.

We have learnt a great deal since the start of the pandemic and we have used this period to further prepare, whilst restarting services that were disrupted by the first COVID-19 wave. Together we will continue to provide safe effective care for our patients, and support each other.

In addition, throughout the last six months, we have continued to provide our Pain Management Programmes to veterans, successfully switching to virtual Programmes to which the veterans have responded very positively. All the treatment we offer to veterans is thanks to the generosity of our Friends, and we are so grateful for your support.

We have recently received the exciting news that the Pain Management Programme has been nominated for a prestigious Health Service Journal Award under the category of Military and Civilian Health Partnership. It's fantastic that the excellent work of our Pain Team has received this well-deserved recognition. I also am proud to announce we have been named as a finalist in the Hospital of the Year category at the LaingBuisson Awards. We are delighted to have received a nomination in this category which reflects the hard work and dedication of our staff and the world-class service that they provide

With rising COVID-19 cases and increasing restrictions, it is inevitable that we will face a challenging winter but we enter into it with confidence and optimism.

Thank you for your continued support and a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your loved ones,



Lindsey Condon

Lindsey Condon,
Chief Executive

Dear Friends,

As I write this we are in the midst of an unparalleled health crisis which is affecting us all.



Our Hospital was created in response to another crisis 120 years ago and since then we have been at the forefront of medical support for veterans. That support is as vital now as ever, perhaps even more so, as the pressures on our NHS mean that for many the waiting times for treatment grow longer.

We are in a uniquely privileged position to be able to help those who have served this nation through their military service and who are unable to afford private treatment or receive timely treatment elsewhere, by providing grants for treatment at the Hospital. Our ground-breaking Pain Management Programme is also delivering life-changing help to veterans who suffer from acute pain.

In this newsletter you will hear from our clinicians and also hear about a wonderfully inspiring lady- so deserving of our medical help through a grant.

We can only offer these grants and programmes because of the generosity of supporters. All the treatment we offer veterans is paid for from donated income. It is our express wish and indeed forms part of the strategic plan of the Hospital, that we help many more veterans in years to come.

This will only be possible through the generous donations of our Friends and supporters.

I know the demands on you all are even more acute at the moment, but I also know how supportive you are of our work with veterans and your generosity to our Hospital's charitable work. That is why we are focussing all our fundraising efforts in raising money to fund our military grants and pain management programme and your support is very welcome.

May I wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and thank you for your support

Tim Brawn
Director of Fundraising

Virtual Veterans' Pain Management Programme Update

We are delighted to inform you that, following our decision to find ways to continue to offer the Veterans' Pain Management Programme (PMP) since lockdown in March, we have now completed seven assessment days and six PMPs virtually.

These have been run with the full multi-disciplinary team offering assessments via Zoom or phone and the PMP via Zoom. The feedback and preliminary outcome data is all positive and encouraging. So far, 42 veterans have learnt to better cope with pain thanks to the virtual PMP.

COVID-19 Response

The pandemic understandably causes anxiety for many veterans with persistent pain, resulting in a negative impact on pain and mood. We are pleased to inform you that we are reaching a significant proportion (up to one third of attendees per PMP) who would not have otherwise been able to manage the commute and stay in London, irrespective of the pandemic.

100% of the veterans who attended the PMP would recommend it to another Veteran

92% of the veterans were very happy with the Zoom format

The Future

Consideration is being given to running a further year with virtual programmes as these have been so successful to date and to secure the safety of the veteran population suffering from chronic pain during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Quantitative and Descriptive Statistics

The paper format of the psychometric questionnaire has been converted into an electronic format which veterans fill out online on programme days. This supports good and safe clinical practise.

The preliminary outcome data of this small sample supports the virtual adaptation of pain management programmes for chronic pain to treat veterans with comorbid PTSD, as well as those without. These initial results show clinically observable greater confidence in engaging in activity and greater ability and confidence with regards to doing everyday activities alongside the pain. Further research and greater samples are required on whether there are measurable benefits to treating veterans on a virtual PMP versus a face-to-face programme.

Veterans' Feedback on Completing the PMP

"It has opened up so much to me that pain when understood can be managed efficiently. There is a lot of academic work ensuring that it is managed to an acceptable level. The programme is first class and will change my life for the better in the future"

"I would recommend this to anyone who has long term pain. I never thought that I could find a non-invasive option to help with the level of pain I have, until now."

"Zoom was wonderful for me; I would not have coped being face to face, in London. The facilitators are BRILLIANT!"

Military Grant

Ghislaine Stovell-Campbell is a 101 year-old former professional ice-skater, ambulance driver and intelligence officer. During the Second World War she served as an officer in the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANYS) and then as an MI5 intelligence officer stationed in the Middle East.

With the FANYS she began her service as an ambulance driver in Scotland assisting wounded soldiers. She drove ambulances all over Great Britain; from Scotland, to Sherborne, from Moreton Hampstead, to Exeter during the 1942 Blitz and finally to Tiverton where a hospital was created at a country house there called Knightshayes.

Ghislaine had served in the FANYS for three years when she was injured putting a stretcher into her ambulance, an orderly slammed the door onto her right hand and it practically chopped off a finger. She was invalided out of FANYS to recover but it wasn't long before she was thinking of how she could assist the war effort next. Before the war, Ghislaine was a professional ice skater; she performed in shows and won a number of gold medals as well a British Ice Dance Championship. So, whilst her hand was healing, she became the leading lady in the Blackpool Ice Show to entertain the troops.

After the shows had ended, her hand had healed so Ghislaine began to think what she could do to better assist her country. Her mother had worked for MI5 during the First World War and had heard they wanted to train someone to do a job in the Middle East. Ghislaine applied and after rigorous testing she was found to have 'performed satisfactorily' and was selected to be assigned to the embassy in Cairo.

Ghislaine worked for three years in Egypt and the Middle East, the job was fascinating but incredibly dangerous. Having signed the Official Secrets Act not even Ghislaine's husband knew what she did, which was probably for the best, and still to this day she remains tight-lipped, revealing only that she had some quite narrow escapes and is very lucky to have survived. What we can say is during her time there Ghislaine was able to climb the pyramids.



Ghislaine in her FANYS uniform

"It was such an honour to serve my country; I am always reminded by the picture of the Queen I have on the wall of my dining room from when I became 100. I'm now 101 but I'm still around and still quite active, I'm very active in my mind."

About a year ago Ghislaine fell at home whilst carrying her dinner tray, badly injuring her shoulder. Whilst recovering after receiving her initial treatment her shoulder developed a severe pain. Its condition deteriorated and the pain got so bad she could no longer sleep at night and had practically lost the use of her left arm. Any attempt at movement became excruciating and made it incredibly hard to maintain the independent life Ghislaine had always led.

Ghislaine's GP was concerned by the worsening condition of her shoulder and the length of the waiting list she was on. Fortunately, as he was aware of her service in the war, he referred her to the Military Grants Team at King Edward VII's Hospital who, after receiving Ghislaine's application, offered her a 100% grant for treatment at the Hospital. Our consultant Mr Andrew Wallace recommended total shoulder replacement surgery; despite her age Ghislaine was desperate for a solution to her pain and immobility so went ahead. The operation was a complete success and after a short stay at the Hospital, Ghislaine was able to return home with a new sense of freedom.

"Thank you very much, it is a great honour to have been awarded such a grant. In spite of all the things I've done I'm not terribly well off so that was just wonderful. I think that King Edwards is the most wonderful hospital I've ever been to."

Visit our '**Veterans' Stories**' webpage for more.

Our Response

In March when the country was placed into lockdown the Hospital was informed it was needed to assist the NHS with the national effort of providing care for patients.

We responded by immediately halting all private work; we cancelled non-urgent surgery, finished existing admissions and closed outpatients. Our Admissions Team worked non-stop from the Friday evening till late on Sunday – ensuring that on the Monday we started admitting and operating on NHS patients.

We admitted urgent cancer patients; those who needed to have their surgery within 72 hours or would suffer a significant effect to life or limb. They were very sick patients and were incredibly grateful to have their procedure carried out. Our Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Team worked tirelessly to ensure we followed the ever changing guidelines to the letter, with strict restrictions in place to keep our staff and patients safe. The full impact of COVID infection was unknown at that time but we knew it could be deadly and that surgical patients had potentially very poor outcomes. It was essential that, if we were to continue to treat urgent cancer patients, we remained COVID free. The vigilance of our teams paid off and we had no reported cases of COVID acquired in hospital for our staff or patients.

The type of patients that our staff and theatres were used to dealing with changed overnight. Our Theatre Team were doing procedures they hadn't undertaken at King Edward VII's Hospital and our Ward Teams – nurses, doctors and physios- suddenly had very complex patients to look after. Not only complex in their medical diagnoses but in their social situations. Some NHS patients faced being discharged to inappropriate housing, or had no housing or support, this was a new challenge for our Ward Team. Our Occupational Therapist became our seven day a week Discharge Co-ordinator, ensuring all the measures were in place for a prompt and safe discharge, allowing us to free up the bed for another urgent patient.

All outpatient procedures were cancelled so the Outpatient Team was deployed to the wards and immediately started to care for critically unwell inpatients. They really stepped up, which is the same across the board. Our Theatre and Critical Care Teams cross trained to be able to support each other. Our Critical Care Team began simulation training on caring for COVID patients – in particular a technique known as proning. I am so proud of how responsive our staff were, it was incredible how quickly everything happened. Our staff just pushed themselves forward and did everything that was asked of them.

At the same time, the NHS asked us for staff to work in The Nightingale Hospital. 35% of our staff base volunteered; we couldn't submit all the applications as some were clinically vulnerable themselves or were needed at the Hospital to care for patients, but it's phenomenal we had that many volunteers.

We had about 10 staff attend the induction at The Nightingale, and two of our nurses were called up and worked there for a month. This willingness to help demonstrates the compassion and dedication to patient care that exemplifies the remarkable staff at the Hospital.

Furthermore, we were sending urgent equipment across to the NHS; ventilators, infusion pumps and various bits of vital kit for the NHS to change their theatres into the Intensive Care Units needed to treat critically ill COVID patients. We sent whatever we could spare whilst still being able to care for our patients

It was really important that members of our Executives Team, Heads of Department and Microbiology consultants were visible and available to staff during the height of the pandemic. Being a front line worker was scary during that time as we had so little knowledge about the virus. Having the visible support of very senior leaders and experts was reassuring to those who had to physically be in the Hospital to do their job.

We talk frequently about the commitment of the Nursing and Clinical Teams however the Housekeeping staff are some of the unsung heroes of this pandemic. They do absolutely critical work keeping the hospital clean and safe and are often the most exposed going in to patient's rooms. Our Catering and Housekeeping Manager and Team Leaders, worked with our IPC Team to provide practical training to ensure staff felt safe and secure. It's a real testament to the Hospital and the commitment of our Housekeeping Team that they kept working throughout – maintaining the exceptional high standards of cleanliness so important for breaking the chain of transmission.

The Catering Team had their own challenges as various suppliers were closed by the pandemic and the Head Chef needed to quickly adjust the menus to ensure nutritious food was available for staff and patients. They went the extra mile, working with suppliers to enable front line staff to purchase essential items and ready cooked meals at work as they were unable to access supermarkets.

The first wave of the pandemic was a very difficult time for many hospitals but we rose to the challenge. We responded quickly to the call for support from the NHS, implementing strict IPC guidelines, protecting vulnerable staff, working together as a team, and collaborating and learning across the organisation.

We learnt so much, built stronger connections internally and externally, and saw over 760 NHS patients during that period. For a hospital of our size, what we've achieved is remarkable. I am honoured to work with each and every team member that made that possible.



Tonya Kloppers,
Matron and Director of Nursing