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Autumn 2025



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“ The service is getting fab reviews and our teams are always looking to develop new services within the centre ”

Dear reader,

Welcome to the latest edition of Talking Point.

There is so much fantastic work and so many brilliant things to tell you about from across University Hospitals Tees.

Lots of things are in place to prepare for the winter period to help cope with the extra pressure on services we see every year – and an exciting new service we plan to launch (to be announced soon!). As we do every year, we will be doing all we can to ensure staff have had their flu vaccine, as well as encouraging our vulnerable patients and families to do the same. A flu bug can be really serious and spread very quickly and – aside from the obvious impact it can have on those vulnerable patients we treat – it can also be very disruptive to our services.

Included in this issue are details about the Tees Valley Community Diagnostic Centre, which opened earlier this year to provide a convenient service to deliver health tests and scans. Since opening in our new state-of-the-art building in Stockton town centre, our teams have delivered thousands of tests and scans to our patients. The service is getting fab reviews and our teams are always looking to develop new services within the centre, including new liver and cardiology services. I am also told that we have record numbers of patients attending their appointments – an issue NHS services have found a challenge in the past. And this is no surprise to me – the service is easy to get to and is quick and convenient.

When we talk about group working, one of the key ambitions is to really create that close working across services and to have a consistent high-quality service for our patients. In this issue we have highlighted two really good examples of this. Over the last year our endoscopy teams have come together to run a regular multi-role meeting to discuss patients being

treated for complex polyps – something which is proving successful (page 12). Meanwhile, our scoliosis teams are working together to help patients like Maisie who has had care across our services (page 11). This has spanned across diagnostics, physiotherapy, surgery, and post-op recovery – thanks to our joined-up approach.

You will also see information about a new role we have appointed into across the group which shows our commitment to offering high quality care to members of our armed forces community. Hannah Robertson is our new Help for Heroes nurse and will be giving specialist support to patients and their loved ones.

As there always is, you will also find news about innovations and team successes across our patch in the Tees Valley, County Durham and North Yorkshire.

Please do share positive stories with us and we will look to include these in future issues.

Thanks for reading.

Stacey Hunter

GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Keep up-to-date with University Hospitals Tees

From career stories to innovations in patient care and more, follow University Hospitals Tees on social media to keep up with the latest news.

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MP Rishi Sunak, 80-year-old scrub nurse Anne Lamb and public health and prevention minister Ashley Dalton cutting the ribbon

Friarage celebrates official opening of £35.5m surgical centre

FRIARAGE Hospital staff celebrated the official opening of their new £35.5million surgical centre.

Public health and prevention minister Ashley Dalton, MP Rishi Sunak and 80-year-old scrub nurse Anne Lamb had the honour of cutting the ribbon for the purpose-built facility.

Theatre teams have helped with every stage of the planning to maximise efficiency and ensure they deliver the very best experience to patients across North Yorkshire and the Tees Valley.

Accredited as a surgical hub by the national Getting it Right First Time (GIRFT) programme, Friarage Surgical Centre features state-of-the-art technology and streamlined pathways to enable teams to treat more people, reduce waiting times and provide the best outcomes for patients while also creating an outstanding work environment for staff.

Stacey Hunter, group chief executive for University Hospitals Tees said: "This

fantastic new facility has six brand new operating theatres with 12 recovery bays, two minor operating theatres with four recovery bays, a regional block room and a dedicated admission and discharge area.

"Well done to everyone involved across our theatre teams and specialties who have worked exceptionally hard to make this happen – it's a huge achievement.

"Thanks also to our building partners, Friends of the Friarage and our local elected representatives who continue to champion the Friarage."

Sarah Baker, lead nurse for the Friarage Surgical Centre project said: "Our old theatres were lovingly cared for but were not able to cope with the demands of new technology. After 10 years of planning, it is so rewarding to be able to give our patients such an amazing facility. It's

all about patients and making it better for them."

The centre will deliver around 10,000 operations a year including hip and knee replacements, gall bladder surgery and cancer surgery.

Andrew Port, consultant orthopaedic surgeon, chair of elective services and the clinical chair of the Friarage Surgical Centre, added: "The Surgical Centre provides a dedicated facility for delivering orthopaedic robotic technology for hip and knee replacements – one of only 15 NHS centres in the UK where this can be accessed. It also utilises smart suite theatre technology for minimally invasive surgery."

Surgical hubs are a key part of the NHS's plan to increase capacity for planned surgery and reduce waiting times.

Mr Sunak, added: "In my ten years as MP for this area, the Friarage has always been my number one priority. A thriving, sustainable, hospital is vital to serve the very rural area it covers. The surgical hub is the cornerstone for its future."

The Surgical Centre provides a dedicated facility for delivering orthopaedic robotic technology for hip and knee replacements – one of only 15 NHS centres in the UK where this can be accessed.

PROACT: Empowering people with Parkinson's

WHEN faced with a life-changing diagnosis like Parkinson's the journey forward can feel uncertain.

But for patients like Becky Gell, timely, personalised support from University Hospitals Tees' Parkinson's Outreach Advanced Community Therapy (PROACT) team made all the difference.

PROACT is a community-based therapy service which supports people with Parkinson's who live in Middlesbrough or Redcar and Cleveland and are under the care of a neurologist at James Cook.

Following assessment, each person receives personalised intervention to empower them to take control of their condition.

Although 63-year-old Becky had been experiencing a tremor for years, she was diagnosed with Parkinson's in August 2024 following a fall.

Traditionally, she would have been referred to community therapies and placed on a waiting list, but instead she was referred directly to the PROACT service and was seen within two weeks.

At her initial assessment, Becky was given a personalised programme to support her with sleep hygiene advice, strategies for attention and concentration, fatigue management, a home exercise plan to support strength and balance, minor adaptations on the stairs and general guidance around adjusting to her new diagnosis.

Thanks to the team's support, Becky achieved her goals.

"I can't speak highly enough of the team", she said. "I told the team that I felt like I'd been put in a Disney film, and they were the princesses. They've helped me so much – they're friendly and very passionate about Parkinsons.

"I felt very comfortable seeing them in my own home and always felt happy when they'd been."

Reflecting on her progress Becky added: "Now I make sure I get the most out of my life."

Backed by pump-prime funding from Parkinson's UK, this two-year pilot has made Parkinson's specialist community therapy a reality.

Since its launch in November 2024, the PROACT team has received over 250 combined physio and occupational therapy referrals.

PROACT has enabled these patients to be seen in a timely manner by a Parkinson's specialist therapist, at the right time, in their place of preference (home) and avoiding the need for acute hospital intervention.

This includes escalating medical concerns to the Parkinson's consultants and nurses direct for speedy action.

Claire Ward, Parkinson's specialist physiotherapist, and Debra Gallant, Parkinson's specialist occupational therapist, have been part of the Parkinson's Advanced Symptom Unit (PASU) since it was established in

2015, and thanks to their commitment they have been able to develop the PROACT service.

This enables Charlotte Smith, Parkinson's physiotherapist, and Tuesday Miller, Parkinson's occupational therapist, to provide specialist therapy for patients when they need it.

Claire said: "The PROACT team allows us to put our patients in charge, as we promote patient-initiated referrals. For a person with Parkinson's having a key contact in the community when needed is essential and feedback regarding the responsiveness and care provided by Tuesday and Charlotte is clearly appreciated. We couldn't be prouder of them both."

Debra added: "We feel incredibly privileged to have the opportunity to work with this group of patients and to be able to give them the specialist intervention, advice and support that they need to independently manage their condition and make a big difference to their quality of life."



Charlotte Smith, Parkinson's physiotherapist, and Tuesday Miller, Parkinson's occupational therapist (left to right)

Trauma survivor credits “NHS heroes” for saving her life

AN avid runner who was hit by a car whilst out training for the Great North Run credits “NHS heroes” for making her dreams come true.

Cat Neill from Darlington was nearing the end of a run when she heard a loud bang, seconds later a car drove across a roundabout, mounted the pavement and hit her, sending her flying in the air.

She was admitted to James Cook where she spent 15 months in and out of hospital.

In an emotional reunion with her physiotherapist Jack Randall, Cat credits her “NHS heroes” for getting her through some of her hardest days.

She said: “The care I have received both as an inpatient and as a trauma outpatient has been outstanding. Everyone played such a crucial part in my recovery.”

Cat underwent nine surgeries on her leg and in May, was told her bone was healed.

She said: “I will never be able to thank the orthopaedic and plastics team enough for what they have done for me; they have wholeheartedly enabled me to start to live my life again.”

She added: “When the accident first happened, there was so much uncertainty, but staff assured me that one day I would really feel like me again and they were right.”

After receiving the news that her bone had healed, Cat returned to the hospital to say thank you to the staff who made her recovery possible.

Throughout her time in hospital, she underwent daily physiotherapy sessions with major trauma physiotherapist

Jack Randall and credits him for giving her the confidence to get back on her feet and make small steps to overcoming her health anxiety.

Speaking at their special reunion, Cat said to Jack: “You made my experience something I don’t think it would have been. I know that I would not have got through this without you.”

Jack said: “When you come into hospital, you are not just a patient but a person and so it is incredibly important that we make you feel safe and listened to in our care. To see you now and the progress you have made is incredible.”

However, Cat is not stopping there, she has now registered to be a Day One Trauma peer support volunteer to help others.

She added: “The staff at James Cook will always be my heroes and I feel it’s important to give thanks to them. They have been crucial within my recovery process and now it’s my time to help.”

When you come into hospital, you are not just a patient but a person and so it is incredibly important that we make you feel safe and listened to in our care.

Cat Neill and Jack Randall



“Faster recovery and less pain”: James Cook marking a decade of modern robotic gynae surgeries

JAMES Cook is celebrating a decade of delivering revolutionary robotic surgeries that have been at the forefront of helping women access faster, safer and less invasive treatment for complex cancer conditions.

Gynaecological surgeons from the Middlesbrough hospital have reached the milestone of performing more than 1,000 robotic surgeries – since its first procedure in 2015.

The da Vinci X and Xi are state-of-the-art robotic-assisted equipment making a vital difference in the lives of women suffering from complex cancer conditions.

Robotic-assisted surgery is an advanced technique where complex gynae cancer surgeries are performed through a keyhole approach.

The adoption of this technology means more hospital beds are now available, with the majority of patients being discharged the day after surgery.

Annalisa Perry and Sue Jeffrey both recently underwent major surgeries to remove cancerous tumours.

Retired council leader, Sue Jeffrey

found a large lump in her abdomen prior to Christmas in 2024.

As a result, robotic-assisted gynae surgery was performed to remove her cyst and she had to undergo hysterectomy and appendectomy – which was essential to treat her ovarian tumour.

She said: “The care I have received was brilliant. It’s great to know that we have such amazing technology, great facilities and expert staff on hand when needed and I would like to say a huge thank you to all involved.”

Retired chef, Annalisa Perry had atypical endometrial hyperplasia since 2020, which is a precancerous condition.

In March 2025, she had an endometrial biopsy, a procedure to detect endometrial cancer or hyperplasia – where the medical team found out she had cancer.

This prompted surgical teams to perform a robotic-assisted gynae surgery to remove her cancerous tumour.

Annalisa, said: “To be honest, I felt no pain on the day of the surgery or after the procedure – it was just like a normal day which is quite shocking considering I went through a major surgery. It is very hard to believe.”

Consultant gynaecologic oncologist Anupama Rajan Babu said: “Robotic surgery allows us to treat complex cancer patients with greater precision, while offering them faster healing and recovery.

“Most patients return to their normal routines much sooner than with traditional open surgery. Compared to open procedures, robotic surgery also results in a cost saving of approximately £5,000 per patient.

“Importantly, it helps free up much-needed hospital beds, allowing us to care for more patients in need and reducing waiting time.”



The team behind the robotic gynae surgeries



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South Tees
Hospitals staff



North Tees
and Hartlepool
staff

HERE
TO
HELP



Specialist nursing role provides personalised care for the armed forces community

University Hospitals Tees has launched a pioneering initiative to provide more personalised patient care for its armed forces community.

FORMER British Army nurse Hannah Robertson was recently appointed as a Help for Heroes nurse for the hospital group.

Thanks to funding from Help for Heroes, Hannah can provide specialist clinical support and advice to the armed forces community which includes those who are currently serving or retired veterans, and their immediate family members.

She said: "I have been to visit several veterans who have all been so welcoming and keen to talk and share stories.

"Not all people need my help. Some just like to have a chat and tell me about their military careers, but for those who do find themselves in the position of needing extra support, it's been an honour to be able to co-ordinate their care and be an advocate."

Hannah's role, which is fully funded by Help for Heroes, was created after the national charity identified a gap in support for members of the armed forces community with many veterans finding it difficult to engage with hospital services and treatment.

Due to injuries and other conditions from their time in service, they can often need additional support during treatment and after-care.

Hannah previously served in the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps for 14 years and worked as a clinical sister on the intensive care ward at James Cook before starting her new role.

She now works across University Hospitals Tees and acts as a liaison between healthcare services.

Using her military training and experience, she helps members of the armed forces community navigate the right care and support for their individual needs, whilst supporting staff with specialist training, guidance and resources.

Stuart Irvine, group director of risk, assurance and compliance said: "Having worked in both military and healthcare settings, Hannah has a wealth of experience and a real passion for helping others. That makes her the perfect fit for co-ordinating personalised patient care for our armed forces community across University Hospitals Tees."



Hannah Robertson, Help for Heroes nurse.

Diagnostic centre carries out more than 15,000 health tests and checks – just months after opening



Since the Tees Valley Community Diagnostic Centre in Stockton Town Centre started to welcome its first patients earlier this year, it has been offering rapid tests for a range of health issues.

THE site in Bridge Street offers a wide variety of diagnostic tests in one convenient location. These include CT and MRI scans, ultrasounds and X-rays as well as a range of lung, heart and blood tests.

It will also soon be running new services to help patients with potential liver and cardiology issues – with all services being provided by staff across University Hospitals Tees.

Since opening in April, it has already performed more than 15,000 tests, checks and scans on patients from the local area.

Simon Milburn, clinical director for the service, said: "We are really pleased with the centre's success so far.

"Patients, their loved ones and our own staff are having a fantastic experience both being treated here and working here.

"It is a bright, spacious environment, away from the busy hospital setting, where our patients can have a better experience.

"Having the opportunity to bring teams from across University Hospitals Tees to work together has also been fantastic – sharing expertise and ways of working.

"We want the centre to be bigger and better, with plans to soon start a liver clinic with specialist fibroscan equipment and a new cardiology clinic."

Proud of success so far



Stacey Hunter, chief executive of University Hospitals Tees, who also attended the opening, added: "We are really proud to have one of the best diagnostic facilities in the country.

"It's also exciting to see how much more we can do from this site – with staff from across the group bringing together a huge range of expertise and knowledge.

"I'd like to thank everyone involved for this support so far, including everyone at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and to our local MPs and health groups."



Staff and stakeholders at the official opening of the Tees Valley Community Diagnostic Centre.

New initiative helps people with spinal curve condition



A new service is improving the detection and management of scoliosis in children and young people – reducing waiting times, streamlining surgical pathways and leading to better health outcomes for patients.

MAISIE, a young university student, is one such success story. Diagnosed with scoliosis in late 2023 after a colleague noticed an unusual curvature in her back, Maisie was referred to a multidisciplinary scoliosis team spanning several hospital trusts. With a significant curve, her condition required corrective spinal surgery.

Thanks to coordinated care led by consultant spinal surgeon Mr Prasad Karpe and supported by community physiotherapist Sarah Robson, Maisie's journey from diagnosis to surgery was smooth, timely, and deeply supported.

Maisie said: "I was perfectly fine knowing I'd be seen across different hospitals – the University Hospital of North Tees first, then The James Cook University Hospital for the surgery."

"It was quicker, more efficient, and the care was exceptional. Now, I'm two inches taller and back into the fitness I love."

Mr Karpe, who performed Maisie's scoliosis surgery, is paediatric surgical lead at James Cook. He emphasised the broader impact: "Scoliosis doesn't always require surgery,

but when it does, timely intervention and comprehensive care lead to exceptional outcomes. Collaboration is key."

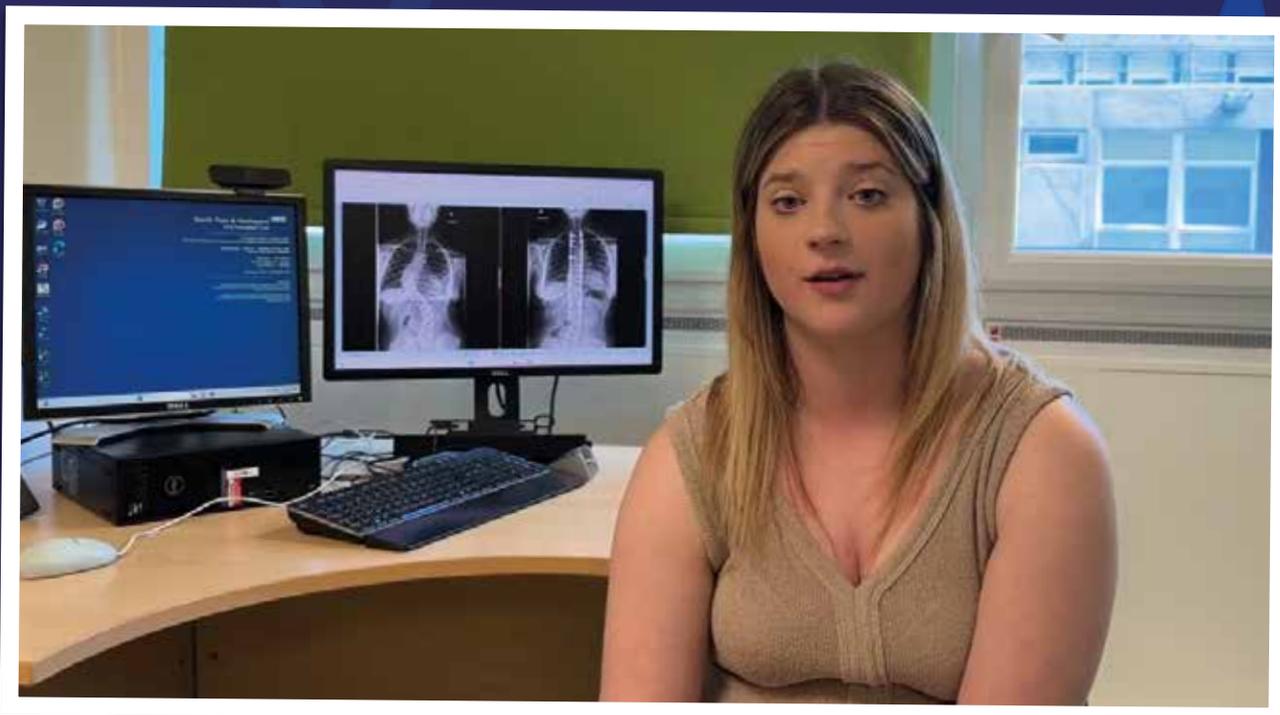
Maisie's case reflects the wider ambition of the service, creating improved links between health services and a better experience for young people with spinal conditions.

The collaborative scoliosis team – spanning diagnostics, physiotherapy, surgery, and post-op recovery – now stands as one of the models for future service integration across the region.

Maisie's message to newly diagnosed patients is clear: "Knowing that you are a scoliosis patient or living with scoliosis doesn't need to impact your life at all. Having the right treatment can positively improve your life."

"The surgery changed my life forever. The care team made me feel safe, supported and confident – start to finish."

To watch Maisie's story, please scan the QR code:



Maisie recently shared her story in a short film.



Bowel patients benefitting from new joint service – as health experts from across Teesside come together

Patients being treated for bowel issues in Teesside are benefiting from the expertise of clinical teams from across the region – thanks to a new joined NHS service.

HEALTH professionals from across University Hospitals Tees meet weekly to discuss treatment for patients found to have large, complex colorectal polyps.

Polyps are small growths on the lining of the oesophagus (food pipe), stomach, the large intestine (colon) or rectum.

The complex polyp team is a meeting of specialists including surgeons, nurses, radiologists and pathologists.

Consultant gastroenterologist and endoscopy clinical lead Iosif Beintaris, consultant gastroenterologist John Jacob and advanced endoscopy practitioner Clare Westwood are among the key members of the multi-disciplinary team, first set up in 2020 for patients across Stockton and Hartlepool. In 2024, this was then expanded to include clinicians from Middlesbrough and Northallerton to help patients in these areas.

Dr Beintaris said: "The team approach we have used is one of just a few nationally and has been very successful to date.

"Its purpose is to review patients with polyps and ensure that the right treatment is offered to the right patient, in a timely manner and a minimally invasive fashion.

"Endoscopic treatments are generally less traumatic than surgery, minimising a patient's hospital stay and saving resources for cases where surgery is the only option, including cancer."

In 2020 and 2021, the complex polyp team reviewed and managed 261 cases, the majority of which were treated with minimally invasive, organ-sparing endoscopic procedures.

In 2023, the number of cases referred to the service and discussed increased to 275 and this number has increased further since the collaboration with teams across University Hospitals Tees.

Speaking about the partnership, Arvind Ramadas, clinical lead for endoscopy, said: "The combined complex polyp group has been very successful in bringing together expert multi-professional teams, which ensures that each patient receives an evidence-based personalised treatment strategy.

"We look forward to establishing patient-centred clinical pathways to deliver the highest quality endoscopy service across University Hospitals Tees."



Advanced endoscopy practitioner Clare Westwood and consultant gastroenterologist and endoscopy clinical lead Iosif Beintaris.



Teesside Together – new regional sexual health service launched

Residents in the local area can access new, improved sexual health services.

WITH four community-based clinics, a new website and helpline, Teesside Together's team of expert clinicians are on hand to offer support to improve all areas of sexual health. Services include clinics on both a referral and drop-in basis to offer advice, sexually transmitted infection testing and contraception.

The service will use the existing sexual health bases in Middlesbrough (Live Well Centre) and Redcar (Leisure and Community Heart Building), and new bases in Hartlepool (Park Towers) and Stockton (Endurance House).

Each hub will serve as a centre for local outreach programmes, with services delivered within their respective communities.

Teesside Together is provided by the Tees Alliance Partnership, which is led by University Hospitals Tees, Hartlepool and Stockton Health and ELM GP Federation. The new service will improve sexual health outcomes and support healthy sexual relationships across the Tees.

Open conversations

Vicky Holt, director of nursing from Hartlepool and Stockton Health, commented:

"At Teesside Together, we are committed to ending the social stigma around sexual health.

"Open conversations around contraception, STI testing and treatments for sexual health conditions can be difficult, but they are also necessary.

"You can talk to our team of experts about anything. We promise we've heard it all before."

David Royal, medical director for ELM GP Federation, said: "With four clinics offering appointments and a drop-in service, plus the support of our local GP and pharmacy network, Teesside Together is rooted in the community we are here to serve. It's vital that we are accessible to local people so we can play our part in improving the sexual health of our region."

Matthew Wynne, University Hospitals Tees care group director, added: "Working in partnership with ELM and H&SH, the GPs and pharmacies, plus support of our commissioning bodies is key to the delivery of this local service.

"It's a true partnership, with all members united in the common goal of improving the health of our region."

More information

Website: www.teessidetogether.co.uk

Call: 01642 924 117



Matthew Wynne, care group director.

Teesside research team exploring ways to reduce radiation exposure in children

CONSULTANT musculoskeletal (MSK) radiologist, Dr Maya Jafari from University Hospitals Tees is leading a new clinical study that could soon see spinal x-rays work without or with much less radiation.

X-rays are commonly used to take images of the spine to help diagnose and monitor Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis (AIS).

Patients with AIS, particularly children, must undergo regular x-rays to help medical teams determine the severity of the curve, monitor its progression and guide treatment decisions.

However, repeated x-rays can cause heightened anxiety for patients and their families due to the increase in radiation exposure.

To help combat these challenges, Dr Jafari and a team of researchers are recruiting children aged 10 to 17 years old with AIS, people over the age of 18

years old diagnosed with AIS in their teenage years and parents/carers of children with AIS to explore their views to improve future scoliosis care.

She said: "There are other ways to take images of the spine that use no or low radiation, but these methods are not widely available within the UK. That's where the SPINE study comes in."

The research team will also interview healthcare professionals from centres throughout the UK and review the medical literature to gather information on current practice and explore other ways of imaging.

Dr Jafari continues: "Ultimately, our goal is to find the best method to use



Dr Maya Jafari

for imaging scoliosis that also reduces exposure to radiation in children and protects future populations."

For more information, email stees.spinestudy@nhs.net

National study aims to improve recovery outcomes for hip fracture patients

PATIENTS undergoing hip fracture surgery could be discharged home sooner and healthier thanks to a new research trial.

Consultant anaesthetists, Andrew Kane and Professor Gerard Danjoux from University Hospitals Tees are recruiting 100 patients with a broken hip to take part in a clinical trial.

The continuous arterial monitoring in elderly and frail patients for hip fracture surgery to prevent low blood pressure (CAREFUL) study aims to investigate whether continuous monitoring of blood pressure for every heartbeat could improve care for older patients living with frailty who have broken their hip.

Half of patients will receive blood pressure readings taken every five

minutes during surgery, which is the current practice.



Andrew Kane

The other half will receive continuous beat-to-beat monitoring which means every beat will be measured continuously without interruptions.

Lead investigator, Dr Andrew Kane from James Cook said: "We know low blood pressure during surgery can be harmful for patients.

"If we monitor blood pressure during every heartbeat, we may pick up on low blood pressure sooner, treat it, prevent harm and in turn improve recovery outcomes."

To get involved, please email: stees.carefulstudy@nhs.net

Funding for both projects are supported via the NIHR Research for Patient Benefit Programme.

Not all heroes wear capes

A PATIENT is expressing gratitude to NHS staff members who saved his life after enduring a cardiac arrest.

Teaching and learning assistant Lisa Davison was leaving the STRIVE building when she found Ken face down on the ground opposite the Murray building.

Kyle Lightfoot, design and communications assistant, who was on his way to home at the time, also noticed Ken through the window and ran outside as he rang an ambulance immediately.

Lisa and Jeanie Venis, who works in social services, both shouted out to clinical educator Michael Nertney and



Jacqui Jones, Ken Groves and Michael Nertney

lead nurse Jacqui Jones who were nearby, they ran over and began CPR.

Jane Harrison, STAQC facilitator, explained: "Jacqui began chest compressions and shouted for someone to get a crash trolley whilst Michael quickly ran back inside to alert the cardiac arrest team."

Anastasia Devine, specialist nurse, was also quick to pull over and took over the airway, as other members of staff, including, Jane Harrison, Chris Hunter, and Alison Wilson also rushed in to provide their support.

Michael quickly attached defibrillator pads and performed a rhythm check on Ken, and the first shock was delivered before the cardiac arrest team arrived; these time-critical interventions ultimately saved Ken's life and gave him the best possible chance.

Ken said: "The information I have received is that for someone to remain unresponsive for so long and to be worked on for the period I was clearly

demonstrates the persistent fight or moreover the heroic efforts you all displayed in saving my life."



Lisa Davison, Ken Groves and Jacqui Jones

Nurse scoops national award for supporting next-gen nurses

PAULA Wilkinson, a nurse in the cardiac intensive care unit and a practice supervisor at James Cook won the Practice Supervisor of the Year Award at the Student Nursing Times Awards.

The Practice Supervisor of the Year Award is in recognition of a practice supervisor, who has demonstrated empathy with their students, adapting their coaching methods to suit the individual, and providing an environment that encourages questions, informed debate and learning.

As a practice supervisor, Paula is responsible for supporting and supervising students in practice to achieve specific competencies needed to complete their training, as part of Nursing and Midwifery Council requirements.

The judges applauded Paula for her infectious enthusiasm and

unwavering dedication to enhancing the student experience. She was called a truly inspiring role model and leader for bringing authenticity, humility and strength.

Paula was also praised for continually identifying areas for growth in herself and those around her and was dubbed a 'gatekeeper to the nursing profession' for exemplifying the very best in practice supervision.

She said: "I am overwhelmed that I have received an award in an area I am so passionate about. I would also like to thank the nursing educators Joanna Icton, Alice Barnard and Robbie Faman, who have encouraged and supported me.

"They have always provided a friendly, supportive and safe learning environment for all students and I feel blessed and lucky to be in a job which I love and adore every day. A big thank you also goes out to all the students I have had the pleasure of teaching over 17 years."



Paula Wilkinson with her team at James Cook



Jessica Beck alcohol care team lead, Mazar Khan and recovery navigator Steven Sherwood (left to right)

“NHS team saved my life”: Teesside man recalls hardest battle of his life

MAZAR Khan is recalling the hardest battle he has ever fought with alcohol and encouraging others to quit the ‘worst addiction’, which takes thousands of lives each year.

Aged 14, Mazar picked up a bottle of alcohol for the first time. Something which started as ‘it’s just a pint’ quickly spiralled within a year into something that kept Mazar on edge 24 hours a day, seven days a week for more than 30 years.

“My last few years of drinking have been nothing but filled with paranoia, fighting with people, losing my business, getting arrested and spending nights at the police station,” he said.

Mazar reached a point where, although he was even scared at the sight of alcohol, he couldn’t stop drinking.

But a turning point in his life was when he had a seizure in March 2024, because of his alcohol

addiction and was rushed to James Cook. This is where he met the alcohol care team.

He added: “When I was at the worst point of my life, something I wanted to get out of but just couldn’t, I met alcohol care team lead Jessica Beck and the wider team who were the ‘guardian angels’ that saved my life.

“I vaguely remember the three weeks I spent in the hospital but what I clearly remember was my strong desire to have a drink once I got discharged.

“But Jessica and her team stood as a wall between me and my addiction, and they were determined to get me the help and support I needed. They never gave up on me.”

Thanks to support from the alcohol

care team, Mazar was placed in a rehab programme and has turned his life around and given up alcohol.

Jessica said: “Mazar doesn’t even remember most of his time at the hospital, but he was asking for help, saying to me, ‘this is the end’ and ‘I’ve had enough’. Despite his 30 years of addiction, he wanted to quit. This is because people like Mazar are at the end of it; they don’t drink for fun but because they need to.

“Our team and everyone involved in Mazar’s care have played a huge role in supporting him through his recovery.”

“If it wasn’t for that team, I would be dead now. They gave me the gift of life,” Mazar added.

In the coming months, Mazar hopes to complete the Recovery Connections Ambassador Programme, providing him with more skills to deliver lived experience support to others.

Beloved hospital volunteer honoured with memorial bench

A MUCH loved volunteer has been remembered with the unveiling of a memorial bench in the Volunteers' Coffee Lounge at James Cook.

Barry Dean, a former Merchant Navy captain, was known for his warm, welcoming nature and quick wit.

Though it was his wife, Irene, who began volunteering at the coffee lounge in June 2009, Barry soon became a regular face there too, volunteering during periods when he was home from sea.

Together, they served countless cups of tea and cake, offering comfort to visitors and staff alike.

Barry's career took him across the world's oceans, but it's the heart of the hospital coffee lounge where his legacy continues to make waves.

He brought with him a lifetime of stories, a gift for conversation, and a talent for making people feel at ease.

"He loved spending time with me and because I was here, he wanted to volunteer too," said Irene, Barry's wife. "He had a lot of time for people, I think that came from his job and he loved being here – we have a lot of happy memories."

Born in Lewisham, London, Barry left the London Nautical School in 1968 to begin his career at sea. He rose through the ranks to become a captain in 1986.

It was during shore leave in 1971 that he met Irene at the Missions to Seafarers in Wilton near Redcar. They married two years later and settled in Guisborough, raising two children, Sarah and Michael, and eventually becoming proud grandparents to Hollie, Emelia and Edward.

The new bench, located in the Volunteers' Coffee Lounge garden where Barry once served with such joy, now offers a place of reflection, conversation and connection, a true reflection of the man it commemorates.

Georgina Oakley, Volunteers' Coffee Lounge manager said: "We have a lot of volunteers at the coffee lounge, but what always stood out about Barry was his willingness to give his time, even when he was home to rest.

"He came in to help alongside Irene with such dedication and care. He was a lovely man, caring, methodical, and always attentive to the little details that made a big difference. We're truly grateful for everything he did for us, and we're honoured that this bench now offers a quiet place for others to remember him, and for Irene and her family to feel his presence here still."

Irene added: "Barry was a good listener, so please take a seat and tell him your stories."



Irene Dean, Coffee Lounge volunteers and Georgina Oakley, Volunteers' Coffee Lounge manager (left to right)



Barry Dean

SOUTH TEES STARS

THE STARS Awards present an opportunity to recognise the individuals, teams and services that go above and beyond their role in delivering excellent patient care.

Congratulations to the winners and to the hundreds of staff who were nominated. You can also nominate your colleagues or teams that have made your day by going the extra mile. Search STARS Award on the intranet to make a nomination. Members of the public can also nominate via southtees.nhs.uk.

Serco security team – Dealing with Difficult Situations

The Serco security team at James Cook was recognised for dealing with a difficult situation.

South Tees STARS shine brightly

Sarah Robson – Respect, Caring and Support

Sarah's outstanding leadership exemplifies everything a supportive and inspiring leader should be.

Her nomination said: "From my first day in the team, Sarah has made me feel welcomed, creating an environment that is inclusive, respectful and encouraging. Her caring nature has been a constant source of reassurance as I've navigated the challenges of starting a new role."

Congratulations Sarah.



Tracey Underwood – Going the Extra Mile

Tracey won a STARS Award for going the extra mile.

She was recognised for going above and beyond during a difficult day.

Despite the extreme cold weather and the amount of snow on the road, which meant she was not able to use her car to deliver care, Tracey set off on foot to walk four miles just to reach Victoria Ward.

Thank you for going the extra mile, Tracey.



Jonathan Broughton and Janette Bulmer – Attention to Detail

Congratulations to our urology colleagues, Jonathan Broughton and Janette Bulmer for being recognised in the latest STARS Awards for their involvement and commitment to

improving the trust's prostate cancer diagnostic pathway.

Their tremendous effort, teamwork, attention to detail and planning has led to a highly significant improvement in the pathway ensuring a much faster diagnosis and more efficient process.

Congratulations.

Muhammad Ahsan Nasim – Communication

Muhammad Ahsan Nasim was recognised for his outstanding communication.

Muhammad stepped in to meet a patient's family to discuss their future care and end of life care at quite short notice due to staff shortages.

His nomination said he explained about the patient's condition and helped everyone agree a plan even though at this point he had not met the patient.

He was praised by his colleagues for doing this in the most dignified manner.

Congratulations.



Marie Redden – Helping Others

Marie Redden was nominated for the Helping Others STARS Award by the trust's STAQC team after her department achieved the highest STAQC accreditation.

One of the factors that contributed to this was Marie as manager. Her staff surveys were exemplar.

Feedback showed that all her team feel supported by her and look forward to coming to work.

As a new manager she has built a whole team culture of been genuinely caring and supportive of each other through her open-door policy.

Well done Marie.



Michelle Lawson and Daniel Mitchell – Teamwork

Michelle Lawson and Daniel Mitchell won a STARS Award for their fast thinking team work.

Daniel, who is one of our podiatry apprentices, became concerned about a patient he was treating and asked for a colleague in an adjoining treatment room for assistance.

The pair worked together to provide the best possible care.

Congratulations!

Former patient makes surprise donation to hospital to help other patients undergoing radiotherapy

PAM Wickham surprised the radiotherapy department at James Cook with a brand-new bladder scanner machine to say thank you for the care she received whilst undergoing treatment in hospital.

In July 2022, she was diagnosed with metastatic poorly differentiated squamous cell carcinoma of unknown primary (CUP).

This rare form of cancer means cells have spread from an unidentified primary site to other parts of the body.

In Pam's case, the lymph nodes in her groin (inguinal lymph nodes) were impacted. Treatment is a challenge because the original source is unknown.

Following thorough investigations, doctors believed Pam's original cancer source to be somewhere in her pelvic organs.

She underwent 11 chemotherapies in 11 weeks along with an additional 25 radiotherapy sessions in her last five weeks of treatment.

It was during this time that Pam first experienced the bladder scanner machines.

To effectively treat her lymph nodes with radiation, Pam's pelvic area had to be the same every single time, and in turn so did her bladder.

The bladder scanner machines were used to quickly assess Pam's bladder volume prior to beginning treatment, avoiding the need for extra scans.

In January 2023, Pam successfully completed her treatment and finally got to ring the bell.

Grateful for the care she received, Pam was determined to give back and help others.

She contacted Lisa Meehan, fundraising manager for Our Hospitals Charity to arrange the surprise donation.

Lisa said: "When Pam contacted us about making this amazing donation, we just knew we had to make it special. It was so important for Pam to give back to the place that had helped her so much. "

Pam and Lisa worked closely with radiotherapy service manager, Claire Huntley to ensure the donation was kept a surprise from staff working in the radiotherapy department for as long as possible.

On the big day, Pam and her husband Mark turned up to the department with the scanner, much to the surprise and shock of the staff who had cared for her.

Radiotherapy service manager, Claire Huntley said: "It is extra special as Pam knows first-hand the impact this bladder scanner will have on the patient experience and the efficiency of the radiotherapy service."

Pam will continue to be monitored at regular intervals at James Cook but for now, everything is going in the right direction.

She said: "The bladder scanner is just a small price to pay for all the wonderful care given to me by the wonderful staff at James Cook. I cannot thank them enough for always treating me as a person and not as a cancer.

"Their professionalism and expertise have given me back my life."



Mark and Pam Wickham (pictured middle) surprising members of the radiotherapy department team

Inflatable MRI scanner preparing children for their scans

“MAMMA, I am too scared to go there,” can often be the worried tone expressed by children when they have to go for a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan.

But thanks to an MRI Fun Day at James Cook, an inflatable scanner, which simulates the real-life experience of what it's like for little ones undergoing an MRI, helped prepare young children for their scans.

The inflatable scanner is a less imposing way to help children overcome their anxieties, while giving them a chance to practice lying still, before they enter a real MRI scanner.

Too often, children can fear getting an MRI scan for a variety of reasons, including a risk of claustrophobia, loud and repetitive noises and lack of understanding.

This has also led to instances where children have had to be sedated, for it to be safe enough for the scan to go ahead.

However, thanks to a generous donation by the British and Irish Chapter of the International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine, the radiology department was successful in acquiring an inflatable MRI scanner for the day – playing a small part in calming the nerves of worried children.

MRI lead Joanne Smith said: “Thanks to the inflatable MRI scanner, many young children and their parents could see what it's like to get a scan in a safe and fun way, and it has helped to put their minds at ease.”

Ollie Smith, 10, was one of the children who attended. He was scared the MRI machine would make him claustrophobic.

His mum, Paulina Smith said: “The inflatable MRI scanner made a big difference in helping Ollie and it was worth coming to the MRI Fun Day.”



Ollie Smith, 10, with his mum Paulina Smith along with the MRI Fun Day team



Children enjoying the MRI Fun Day

Consultant honoured with Prestigious recognition

CONGRATULATIONS to honorary consultant dermatologist Andrew Carmichael for being honoured with the prestigious International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS) Certificate of Appreciation award at the Annual Meeting of the British Association of Dermatologists.

Andrew won the award under the category European Humanitarian Dermatologist for his voluntary work in Kumasi, Ghana, including helping to develop an e-discussion forum for challenging dermatology cases over the past 15 years.

Andrew said: “I can't think of any other domain of my dermatology practice for which I would rather

be recognised than Humanitarian Dermatology. I am very grateful to the ILDS for making this award.”

These annual awards aim to recognise dermatologists who have undertaken work in their own time in a selfless, humanitarian and not-for-profit manner to improve the skin health of people in deprived areas of the world.



Andrew Carmichael (right) at the official ceremony

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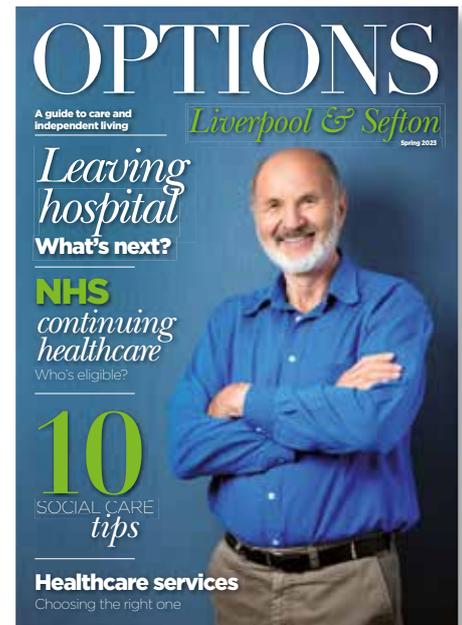
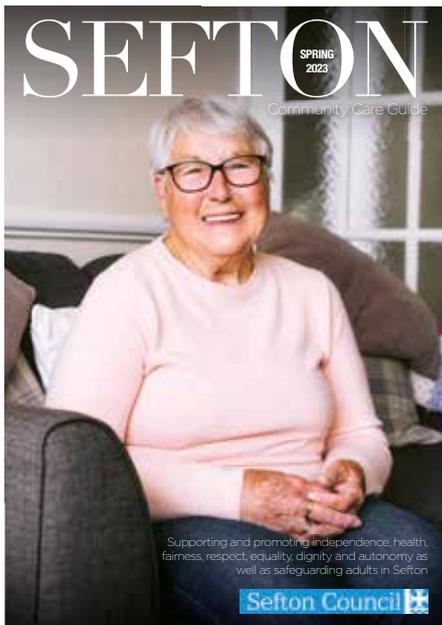
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