Hourly RU OK? checks provide extra reassurance for hospital patients

The RU OK? campaign is in line with David Cameron’s pledge for hourly rounds on wards as well as the ‘six Cs’ recently set out by England’s chief nursing officer Jane Cummings – care, compassion, competence, communication, courage and commitment.

Assistant director of nursing Bev Cox, who is leading the campaign, said: “We want to be the best we can possibly be for our patients, their families and carers, and always looking at ways to improve.

“RU OK? is a pledge we make to all our patients. Our clinical teams will check they are comfortable and safe at least once every hour, and if any concerns or needs are identified they can be dealt with promptly.

“This proactive approach helps us maintain the highest levels of patient safety and ensure those in our care have the best possible experience.”

RU OK? builds on comfort rounding, which is aimed at inpatients at a high risk of suffering a harm event such as a fall. RU OK? is for all patients.

Data collected through comfort rounding, RU OK? and matron walkrounds is collated by the Trust and used by managers and clinical teams to gain feedback from patients and carers.

This supports them in providing the best possible patient-centred care.

Patients are being checked to see if they are comfortable and safe at least once every hour as part of a new campaign launched by the Trust.

The Trust makes the commitment to every patient in the acute North Devon District Hospital and the 17 community hospitals it manages across the county.

Nurse Jenny Clements checks on patient Charles Symons during the RU OK? pilot on Staples Ward at NDDH. Charles said: “The nurses do their rounds, see if you’re alright and help you as much as they can. They make you feel comfortable and relaxed.”

News for staff and friends of NDHT

Trust vision

We will deliver integrated health and social care to support people to live as healthily and independently as possible, recognising the differing needs of our local communities across Devon.
Six community nurses from the Trust starred in a new primetime television documentary on ITV.

Nursing the Nation celebrates the unsung work of community nurses across the country as they go about their daily rounds caring for patients in their own homes.

The programme captures their affectionate relationships with a diverse range of patients, who show an inspiring ability to grasp life in the face of adversity.

Five nurses from North Devon and one from East Devon were followed during the first series of the show, along with their counterparts from Yorkshire and Bath.

Carolyn Mills, the Trust’s director of nursing, said: “Our community nurses do a fantastic, vital but largely invisible job caring for and supporting patients in their own homes.

“They work with people at what can be the most difficult times in their lives, making sure they feel safe and cared for.

“They develop relationships with patients and, as they see them in their own homes, often become a huge part of their lives and cornerstones of the local community.

“I am very proud of the wide-ranging service our community teams provide and am delighted this programme gave an insight into the amazing work they do.”

The seven-part series aired in January and February and featured three members of the Ilfracombe district nursing team – Ellie Maloney, Louise Mulholland and Tina Edwards.

Also appearing were Sarah Miller and Lesley Yeo from Torrington along with Shiobhan Pickering, the Trust’s dementia matron for Axminster, Seaton and Sidmouth.

North Devon District Hospital has won a prestigious national award for innovation for its computerised cancer pharmacy system.

NDDH was a winner in the Alliance Healthcare Pharmacy Awards held at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London.

The computer database was developed in his own time by Rufus Smith, one of NDDH’s pharmacy experts, and allows the hospital to log and follow all aspects of patients’ chemotherapy treatment.

The custom software creates daily treatment schedules and worksheets that simplify the types and amounts of medication to be made up.

The system manages stock control, can be used as a predictive tool and provides comprehensive records for clinicians or pharmacy staff.

Niall Ferguson, director of pharmaceutical services for the Trust, said: “Rufus has done some pioneering work which has deservedly been recognised on a national scale.

“A great deal of effort goes into ensuring patients get the right treatment at the right time.

“Rufus’ software has smoothed this process and brought great benefits in accuracy, simplicity and efficiency since it was introduced a year ago.”

The software replaced a manual, paper-based system and has significantly reduced the need for checking and the time required to prepare cancer treatments.

Niall said up to £20,000 had been saved by developing the system in-house, free of charge.

Rufus, the Trust’s senior pharmacist for cancer and technical services, collected the Alliance Healthcare Hospital Pharmacy Innovation Award and £1,000 in vouchers at the ceremony in London.

The event was hosted by impressionist Rory Bremner and was attended by over 650 of the UK’s leading pharmacists and other guests.
Seaton’s ‘Angels of Mercy’ are our Healthcare Heroes

The Seaton Home Nursing Team has been named the winner of the Trust’s Healthcare Hero Awards.

Helen Wellstead, Caroline Shuttleworth, Eliz Livingstone and Caitlin Bodington received a flurry of nominations from people who were keen to tell us how the team had touched their lives.

The quartet offer shelter to patients and their families in and around Seaton who are experiencing the effects of a life-limiting illness.

They were described as ‘Angels of Mercy’ by some people and were widely praised for being kind, supportive, compassionate, understanding and knowledgeable.

Many said they brought a ray of sunshine into their lives at a difficult time and that they would have struggled to cope without them.

The awards gave the public the opportunity to vote for any employee of the Trust – no matter what their job role – who had gone beyond the call of duty and made a positive impact on their lives.

Jac Kelly, chief executive, said: “We were overwhelmed by the nominations for the Seaton Home Nursing Team – no matter what their job role – who had gone beyond the call of duty and made a positive impact on their lives.

Joan Bisseker, community nurse manager, said of the Seaton team: “I receive wonderful letters of appreciation and expressions of gratitude from patients’ relatives weekly, who always comment on their professional and loving care, constant support and that they would have struggled without their input.

“They are an amazing team, and the district nursing team are all very proud of their achievements and hard work in Seaton.”

The Trust ran the awards in conjunction with Archant South West, who publish a number of newspapers in East Devon, as well as the North Devon Journal and Okehampton Times.

The judging panel also announced a runner-up, Becky Garnsworthy, while seven nominees were commended.

Becky, the Trust’s community matron for Honiton, was described as a ‘remarkable woman’ who makes patients feel special and brightens their day.

For more information about the awards and nominations, visit www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk.
NDDH launches out-of-hours hydrotherapy service

People can discover the benefits of hydrotherapy thanks to a new out-of-hours service at North Devon District Hospital.

Hydrotherapy is a form of physiotherapy which involves the use of water to relieve pain, such as joint or muscle problems.

The hydrotherapy pool at NDDH has offered rehabilitation to patients across the Trust – referred by hospital consultants and GPs – since it was built through public donation in the early 1970s.

From March, the pool is being opened up to self-referrals by adults who would like to use the facilities out of hours to promote or maintain their physical wellbeing.

Sarah Treble, hydrotherapy lead for the Trust, says the pool can help to rejuvenate, reinvigorate and relax your whole body.

She said: “Clinical trials have shown that pain related to activity decreases more significantly with water rather than land-based exercise.

“This is supported by patient feedback at NDDH, with many praising the quality of the service and saying it is invaluable in their treatment.”

The service’s five-strong team includes two senior physiotherapists who have completed advanced hydrotherapy training and have over 40 years’ experience between them.

There are also two clinical support workers with skills in hydrotherapy and rehabilitation as well as a pool engineer, who ensures the environment is safe and ready to use.

Recent changes to the booking system have seen the waiting list drop from up to six weeks to less than two weeks. The majority are booked on referral.

The pool is available for private rental to the local community and a baby swim school uses it to good effect, with the warmth of the water at 35 degrees Celcius providing great comfort.

The service also has a gym space available for rental, which already accommodates cardiac rehabilitation and pilates classes out of hours.

For more information, call Sarah on 01271 850822.

Specialist physiotherapy scheme for hip patients is featured in international journal

A pioneering scheme that smoothes the pathway for hip patients to undergo surgery has been highlighted in an international journal.

The scheme is run by a small team of specialist physiotherapists from the Trust in conjunction with consultants from the Princess Elizabeth Orthopaedic Centre at Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital.

The Trust’s extended scope physiotherapy (ESP) team holds clinics at community hospitals across Exeter, Mid and East Devon, where patients receive in-depth assessments and are signposted to an appropriate service based on their condition and individual needs.

Where conservative measures are not deemed appropriate, the specialist physiotherapists are able to place patients who meet set criteria directly onto the surgical waiting list at RD&E.

The process, known as direct listing, has been shown to be safe and effective and has brought positive feedback from patients.

Patients find these local clinics more convenient, accessible and efficient as direct listing can accelerate onward referral to the orthopaedic unit.

Local clinics reduce travel costs for direct-listed patients, who do not need to attend an outpatient appointment at RD&E prior to their pre-op assessment.

The scheme is the subject of a research paper written by Trust physiotherapist Nikki Parfitt, entitled ‘Direct listing for total hip replacement (THR) by primary care physiotherapists.’

The paper was published in ‘Clinical Governance: An International Journal.’

Nikki is joined in the five-strong ESP team by Jane Finegan, Mike McGibbon, Martin Dowdall and Sue Chrisee.

Members of the team organised a poster presentation on direct listing at the British Hip Society’s annual conference in 2012.

The system is in line with the Government-led Patient’s Charter and Musculoskeletal Services Framework, which are aimed at improving patient satisfaction and increasing efficiency.
New rehab clinics and booking system help patients in Exeter

Patients are benefitting from the launch of new one-stop assessment clinics led by Exeter’s community rehabilitation team.

The team, based at Mardon Neurological Centre, sees Trust occupational therapists and physiotherapists work closely with a clinical psychologist from the Devon Partnership NHS Trust and enabling staff from the county council.

They provide a specialist, multi-disciplinary rehabilitation approach for adults with mainly neurological conditions.

The joint clinics enable the team to identify and focus on each patient’s individual needs and set personalised goals, while they can provide immediate advice on coping strategies, exercise and more.

A team of three speech and language therapists, based at Exeter Community Hospital (Whipton), is on hand to assist on an ad hoc basis.

The new clinics mean patients are assessed more quickly, the number of times they need to visit the unit to be seen by different professionals is reduced and they avoid having to repeat their stories.

Goals are agreed with the patient as a team, who decide if they require all professions input or which is the priority.

Sue Campling, therapy manager in Exeter, said the new service was more patient-focused, holistic and timely.

She said: “Feedback from patients indicates the service provides a co-ordinated team approach, one point of contact for the team plus immediate ideas, tips, education and support on how to manage.”

Meanwhile, the team of community physiotherapists, occupational therapists and admin staff at Exeter Community Hospital (Whipton) have worked together to set up an electronic patient booking system.

The therapists maintain an individual e-mail calendar which they each keep up to date about six weeks in advance, making it easier for admin staff to book in new patient appointments. The more efficient system means therapists have more face-to-face time with patients, who have more notice of appointments.

For more information about the Trust’s therapy services in Exeter, call Sue on 01392 380666.

North Devon study aims to improve care for people with dementia

People with dementia are being offered the chance to take part in a series of fun activities such as word games, quizzes and art discussion for a trial aimed at improving care for patients.

Volunteers in North Devon will participate in a programme of mentally stimulating and enjoyable activities that will be delivered by their family carer in the comfort of their own home.

The programme, called Individual Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (iCST), is open to people with mild to moderate dementia and their carers from across the area.

Nathan Vernon, a research nurse for the Trust, is working with a consultant psychiatrist and mental health nurse from the Devon Partnership NHS Trust to deliver the trial.

The project also involves University College London (UCL), where the programme was developed.

Nathan said: “iCST has been adapted from a group therapy called Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST).

“Research has found that taking part in CST improves cognition, communication skills and quality of life for people with dementia.

“It allows older adults to take part in meaningful and stimulating activities and is currently recommended by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence.

“The iCST trial in North Devon will compare iCST with usual care to observe whether people with dementia and their carers are likely to experience benefits as a result of taking part.”

People who agree to participate will have a 50-50 chance of being allocated in the group undertaking the trial.

Nathan, who is based at NDDH, said: “It is a home-based programme and will not involve any hospital visits.”

For more information, call Nathan on 01271 311584.

Peggy Norman tries the type of quiz game that will be used as part of the dementia study in North Devon. She is pictured with her son, Chris.
Ophthalmology project moves forward

The board is excited by developments in the way care is delivered for patients with two common eye conditions – glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration.

Phase one of the ophthalmology project is ongoing and involves the set-up of new image processing techniques at NDDH and changes to the way eye specialists work.

The board has recently approved phase two, which has been driven by clinicians and will see the imaging service rolled out to some of our community hospital sites.

This means a move from conventional follow-up clinics at NDDH to virtual clinics at community hospitals, where images can be taken and sent electronically to be reviewed by eye specialists or consultants in Barnstaple.

The new system will bring many benefits, such as patients no longer needing to travel to Barnstaple to see an eye specialist and the opportunity to send images to other healthcare professionals.

It will also release valuable clinician time, which can be used to see new or follow-up patients who do require a face-to-face consultation or even increase day surgery.

Taking tough, and sometimes unpopular, decisions

Many of you will have heard about the tough but vital decision we took to temporarily close the inpatient ward at Moretonhampstead Community Hospital.

The decision centred on concerns we had over the difficulties faced by staff in maintaining core clinical skills when they see so few patients in a small rural hospital.

Action plans had been put in place to address these concerns previously but at our board meeting in January we could not be assured there was sufficient consistency in the safety and quality of inpatient services at the hospital.

We discussed a temporary closure for three months to give us time to address the concerns more fully, during which time patients and staff would be supported in an alternative setting.

Executive directors were asked to come up with a plan to ensure this could be put in place successfully without patient safety being compromised in the meantime, and these proposals were approved unanimously.

Among the actions taken since that meeting was the introduction of a rotation system for staff so they could have greater access to higher numbers of patients, including at Okehampton Hospital.

The board did not take the closure decision lightly. Patient safety and quality is our number one priority and we felt very strongly this action was required.

We understand that some decisions we take are not universally popular among the public, but you can be assured we make them with the best interests of patients and staff in mind.

Supporting NHS innovation

The board fully supported the Trust’s decision to join the South West Peninsula Academic Health Science Network.

The network aims to accelerate innovation in the NHS by putting research into practice and developing integrated health services.

Foundation Trust update

In the latest stage of our application to become an NHS Foundation Trust, our board met board representatives from the South West Strategic Health Authority (SHA) and the NHS Trust Development Authority (TDA) in Taunton.

All Trusts go through this process, and the aim was to reassure the SHA and TDA we were ready to proceed to Foundation Trust status based on our current performance, five-year strategy and financial position.

Our board members were challenged on a number of issues, including our performance, priorities for patient care and service plans, as well as the way they work as a team. Feedback was positive and we are through to the next round.

The next stage will involve working with our commissioners on the future services they would like us to provide and ensuring our business plans are aligned.

Thank you Amelia

We were sad to see Amelia Tucker-Jones leave the board due to work commitments, after six very fruitful years as a non-executive director.

We would like to thank Amelia for her invaluable input and support and we wish her well for the future as she focuses on her busy role as chief executive officer of the North Devon Family Mediation Service.

We are now working with the NHS Trust Development Authority over the appointment of a new non-executive director.
Trust launches new Friends and Family Test

All North Devon District Hospital inpatients, and patients who have received care in a ward, medical assessment unit or A&E department, are to be given the opportunity to provide immediate feedback about their experience.

Due to be launched on 1 April, the Friends and Family Test comprises just one simple question: How likely are you to recommend our ward/A&E department to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment?

We are asking all our staff to make sure every patient knows they can answer the Friends and Family Test question – and we hope patients, their family or carers start asking our staff for the question cards.

Carolyn Mills, director of nursing, said: “The feedback we get from patients is overwhelmingly positive and I would like the rest of the NHS to see the high standard of care we provide in our hospitals and patients’ homes.

“The results are really valuable as they absolutely correlate to high staff satisfaction, well-performing services and low numbers of complaints.

“This means our clinicians can quickly spot where problems are occurring and act to put them right.”

More information can be found on our website at www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk or on Bob, our staff intranet site.

Do you fancy joining our Readers’ Panel?

The Trust produces hundreds of leaflets for patients and visitors.

Some cover types of operation or medical condition. Some explain what to expect on our wards or how to continue recovery at home.

But do the leaflets tell you what you want to know? Do they explain things clearly? Do they answer your questions?

We try to get it right, but need to be sure.

Could you help us by checking leaflets before they are printed and letting us know if they’re okay?

It wouldn’t take much time but could make a big difference to the thousands of patients we see each year.

If you are interested in joining our Readers’ Panel, or would like to find out more, please contact Izumi Whitaker on 01271 313970.

STAR is born!

The Trust has launched a new workforce development website which allows staff to access all their training requirements in one place.

STAR is an easy-to-use website which staff can access at work or at home with any internet-connected device.

They can view their records, needs and current position on mandatory training, book courses online, take part in online forums and access e-Learning with the help of video guidance.

It means staff no longer have to telephone or e-mail the administration team to book the course they need.

STAR, which stands for Staff Training Access Resources, was launched in March and more content will be added to the website over the coming months.

The Trust is committed to supporting all its staff to develop and has recently joined forces with Open 4 Training Devon, an external organisation that helps to source potential funding from private companies.
Would you like to help inspect your local hospital?

The Trust is looking for people who would be interested in inspecting their local hospital.

We would like to recruit a pool of volunteers to join staff in assessing North Devon District Hospital in Barnstaple and all 17 of our community hospitals.

The inspections will take in issues such as cleanliness, meals, the condition and suitability of buildings and how the privacy and dignity of patients are respected.

The recruitment drive is part of a new national system of annual inspections known as PLACE (Patient-led Assessments of the Care Environment).

The first hospital visits under PLACE are due to take place in April 2013.

Trust members and volunteers, as well as recent patients, their friends and their relatives, are all eligible to take part.

They will help to ensure the patient’s voice is heard loud and clear when inspection reports are published each year.

Patient assessors will need to set aside between five and 10 hours for an inspection, including preparation and input into the report.

Recent personal experience of hospital care would be useful but not essential.

Older people are important, as they make up the majority of our patients, but younger people are also needed, especially when it comes to assessing maternity and children’s services, for example.

In return, the Trust will do all it can to help patient assessors and make them feel welcome, covering expenses, providing training and organising and paying for checks with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

For more information, call facilities manager Lisa Wright on 01271 311821, e-mail her at Lisa.Wright@ndevon.swest.nhs.uk or visit www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk.

Continued professional and personal development: Make the most of your potential

A key factor in the Trust’s future success will be our ability to help staff fulfil their potential, by constantly building skills and ability.

As well as offering direct benefits to patients, this will add to job satisfaction, aid retention, boost career options and extend the pool of talent for future leadership.

Alongside a prospectus of some 250 different courses, we therefore continue to support staff development externally, principally through vocational qualifications, degree-level studies and conferences.

In both 2011 and 2012, we supported around 400 staff through learning and qualifications outside the organisation.

We work in partnership with Plymouth and Coventry universities, Education Training and Skills, Petroc and the Institute of Leadership and Management.

These partnerships enable us to offer large numbers of academically accredited and recognised courses in-house, including:

- Apprenticeship
- Vocational qualifications
- Level 2 and 3 leadership courses
- Excellence in Leadership
- Degree-level courses as part of BSC Pathways, including care of the critically-ill, anaesthetics, community, infection control, moving and handling and MIU (coming soon)

Work with these partners has enabled around 320 staff to achieve recognised qualifications in the last two years.

Staff can find out more information on Bob, our intranet site.

Get in touch

If you have a suggestion or submission for a future edition, call Caroline Maddams on 01271 311575 or 01392 356962, or e-mail her at caroline.maddams@nhs.net.