Welcome!

This edition of Mainstream is being sent to our 7,206 public members at home as well as our staff at work. Originally a two-colour staff newsletter, Mainstream has developed into a reader-friendly, full-colour magazine for our staff and our public members.

Head of Communications Paul Searle explains: “Nearly every story in Mainstream starts off as a suggestion from a member of staff. But recently suggestions have come in from the public, such as a suggested feature on the Gastro-Intestinal Cancer Support Group which appeared last month on page 10.

And on page 11 this month, we have some news sent in from the Colchester Hospital Prosthetic User Group.

“Four times a year we send Mainstream to all public members to help them stay up-to-date with our Trust and the services we provide.

“Mainstream hasn’t changed much to become a staff and public members’ magazine and we will continue to publish it monthly for distribution within the hospitals.”

Membership Helpline at foot of back page

To subscribe to Mainstream or to download copies, visit this page on our website: www.colchesterhospital.nhs.uk/mainstream.shtml

Email your comments, suggestions and photos to info@colchesterhospital.nhs.uk

Postnatal hospital care in north east Essex is among the best in England, according to a national survey published by the Care Quality Commission on 2 December.

Our Trust achieved a score of 85 out of 100 for treating women with kindness and understanding in hospital after they had given birth.

Head of Midwifery Dymphna Sexton-Bradshaw said: “This survey is based on what the women themselves told us and is a ringing endorsement of the professionalism of our staff in maternity services.”

Meanwhile, the quality of outpatient services across north east Essex has received international recognition. The outpatient services run by our Trust have been awarded ISO 9001 quality management accreditation, believed to be the first outpatient service in the East of England to achieve the accolade.

Service Manager for Specialist Surgery Julian Greaves said: “It’s reward for the hard work of staff. It means that patients can be assured that confidential information is kept secure, that we keep accurate records and that we have a system in place that means the service is monitored closely and we systematically learn from mistakes.

Lastly, our hospitals have received a clean bill of health in the Hospital Guide, published in The Observer on 28 November by Dr Foster, the company which compares health trusts across England.

Our Trust was rated “in line with the expected figures” for all areas of assessment.

The report demonstrates the progress the Trust has made as a result of our focus on improving patient safety and the patient experience.

Read the full stories on our website, under “Latest News”: www.colchesterhospital.nhs.uk

See also: www.drfosterhealth.co.uk/hospital-guide/
A n experienced nurse has been appointed to a new post to work closely with critical care and A&E staff at Colchester General Hospital to identify potential organ donors.

Gail Mander, a Specialist Nurse for Organ Donation, is employed by NHS Blood and Transplant to support families who agree that their loved ones’ organs can be donated.

The number of people needing a transplant is expected to rise steeply over the next decade due to an ageing population, an increase in kidney failure and scientific advances resulting in more people being suitable for a transplant.

Gail divides her time between Colchester and Chelmsford-based Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust, providing advice and support on all aspects of donation.

People meeting strict clinical criteria can potentially donate a range of organs and tissues after their death, including the heart, heart valves, kidneys, lungs, liver, pancreas, small bowel, pancreas, corneas, bone, skin and tendons.

When a patient meets the criteria, Gail, whose main base is at Colchester General Hospital, is contacted by hospital staff and will then, if appropriate, liaise with the patient’s family.

“I’m already loving my new role,” she said. “I’ve always had an interest in organ donation and I feel I can make a huge difference. It’s amazing how positive families can be even when they are going through the most awful circumstances. Often, it gives them something to focus on if they know that some good can come out of what for them is a deeply painful personal tragedy.”

If a patient is found to be a suitable donor and their family gives consent, a team of specialist surgeons will come to the hospital and carry out the donation procedures and take the tissues and organs away for transplant surgery.

Gail’s role includes making staff aware of the possibility of organ donation.

She also keeps in touch with families so that, for example, if they are interested she will write to them with details about how their loved ones’ organs and tissues have been used but without identifying the recipients.

A record high of 3,706 transplants were carried out in the UK in 2009/10 but by the end of that year 7,997 patients were still on the waiting list.

Read the full story on our website, under “Latest News”: www.colchesterhospital.nhs.uk
Nominate your nursing star!

As a nurse, midwife or healthcare assistant made a real difference to you or a loved one? Now you can say a big thank you by nominating them for a unique Nursing Standard award.

Launched by the UK’s best-selling nursing journal, Nursing Standard, the Patient’s Choice Award 2011 provides the public with a very special opportunity to highlight and reward outstanding practice within the nursing profession.

Nursing Standard editorial director, Jean Gray said: “Nurses strive to give the best possible care to their patients. Now patients and their loved ones have the chance to say thank you.

“Nursing Standard is delighted to offer this golden opportunity to recognise and celebrate those nurses who have performed beyond the call of duty.”

Last year, Nursing Standard received more than 250 nominations, featuring nurses, patients and families from villages, towns and cities throughout the UK.

Members of the public can nominate a nurse, midwife, health visitor or healthcare assistant online or by phone.

The closing date for nominations is 21 January. After voting closes, an expert panel of judges will select three finalists.

Members of the public will then be invited to vote for the nurse who they believe most deserves the accolade.

The winner will receive their award – including a prize of £1,000 – at a ceremony, held in London on 28 April.

To nominate a nurse, midwife or healthcare assistant, members of the public can call 020 8423 1066 to request an entry form. Or visit the website and vote online: www.patients-choice.co.uk

Trust consults on Single Equality Scheme

The Trust is determined to do all it can to promote equality and diversity, not only within the organisation but with its patients and the wider community.

To help achieve this, the Trust has brought together a range of schemes – gender equality, disability equality, race equality and equal opportunities – into one draft Single Equality Scheme which it is now consulting on.

Director of Workforce Rob Bowman said: “We are seeking views from the public, staff and interested organisations on our draft scheme. It aims to promote equality and diversity in our role as both a large local employer and as a provider of health services.

“Of course, setting out policies is the easy part: delivering them is the challenge. Key to this are the views of the people we serve and work with which is why we are asking for your feedback and views on the scheme.”

The consultation will close on 11 March.

The Single Equality Scheme consultation and publication is available on the Trust’s website. Additional hard copies of the document are available on request: www.colchesterhospital.nhs.uk/equality_schemes.shtml
Countdown begins to governor elections in 2011

It’s been three years since the Trust held its first governor elections. And so the public and staff members of the Trust will have an opportunity early in 2011 to stand for election as governors.

All public members (there were 7,206 on 1 December) and staff members (3,619, which is virtually the entire workforce), are eligible to vote and put themselves forward as candidates.

All 15 public governor posts and five staff governor posts will be available, with voting by postal ballot starting in late March and finishing on 1 April.

Members have until 22 February to decide whether they wish to stand for election. Existing governors can stand for a second term of office and successful candidates will serve for three years.

A series of “I want to be a Governor” meetings are being held to explain what is involved and encourage the public and staff to put their names forward. They will be open to existing members as well as the public (see page 13 – “In the Diary”).

The Members’ Council comprises public and staff governors along with five stakeholder governors representing organisations like NHS North East Essex (the PCT) and Essex County Council.

Sally Irvine, Chair of the Members’ Council and the Board of Directors, said: “I am convinced that the involvement of public and staff governors and having a Members’ Council elected in this way has helped us to improve the services we provide.

“I want as many of our members as possible to become involved in the elections and I encourage anyone who can give their time and experience to consider standing to become a governor.”

The Members’ Council works closely with the Trust’s Board of Directors to influence decision-making and strategic planning while monitoring performance and holding the Board to account.

Keep up to date with the election at our website under “Elections”: www.colchesterhospital.nhs.uk

Governors work together to advise and influence on how the NHS Foundation Trust develops to meet people’s needs.

They meet with people in their local community or staff group to listen to their ideas and opinions and to report back on what happens at Members’ Council meetings.

Governors discuss major service developments, the annual report and accounts, and how members are recruited and informed.

Governors follow a code of conduct and are given the power to appoint the Chairman and non-executive directors and approve the appointment of the Chief Executive. They also appoint the Trust’s Auditors and make recommendations for the revision of the Trust’s constitution.

The Trust holds elections for governors every three years.
A two-year research project is underway in Colchester to identify new ways of diagnosing the most common cancer in men.

It is being led by clinical research fellow Dr Zubair Cheema, pictured, who divides his time equally between Colchester General Hospital and the University of Essex.

Currently, the main test for the disease is a PSA (prostate-specific antigen) test, which looks for raised levels of PSA – a protein produced by some of the cells in the prostate – in the blood, but this is not very reliable.

Dr Cheema’s research will involve looking for new biomarkers for prostate cancer.

“The PSA test is problematic because over 65 per cent of men with a raised PSA level will not have cancer, partly because PSA levels tend to rise in all men as they get older,” he said. “Also, up to 20 per cent of men who do not have prostate cancer will not have a raised PSA level.

Therefore, there is currently much research worldwide to identify more effective ways to diagnose prostate cancer, of which there are currently 35,000 new cases a year in the UK.

“If there were a more specific and sensitive biomarker that enabled clinicians to do this, it might reduce the need for other diagnostic tests, like biopsies which are invasive and uncomfortable, and make diagnosis more straightforward.”

Dr Cheema is recruiting men who are patients at Colchester General Hospital recently diagnosed with prostate cancer to take part in the study. He will be taking blood samples from them for analysis. He has been pleased by the positive response from men to invitations to take part in the study, and hopes to recruit a total of about 100 patients.

Use antibiotics in the right way

Patients, visitors and staff are being urged to use and prescribe antibiotics in the right way.

The misuse of antibiotics in hospital is one of the main factors driving antibiotic resistance but the prudent use of antibiotics can prevent the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

The Trust’s Antibiotic Team consists of Claire Allen, Clinical Pharmacy Technician; Vicky Bywater, antibiotic nurse; and Dr Gillian Urwin, consultant microbiologist and lead clinician for patient safety.

Claire said: “The key message to patients and visitors is that antibiotics will not cure a cold or viral infection and are totally inappropriate in those circumstances.

“The message to staff is to remind them about our antibiotic prescribing policies and guidelines in the intranet’s e-library and how they contribute towards patient safety.

“For example, misuse of antibiotics may cause patients to become colonised or infected with MRSA, and their misuse is also associated with an increased incidence of Clostridium difficile infections.”

Visit this website for more: ecdc.europa.eu/en/EAAD/Pages/Home.aspx/
Virtual reality technology to be used to train surgeons

A Trust surgeon is pioneering a new technique for training bowel surgeons that uses state-of-the-art virtual reality (VR) technology. VR simulators, which have improved over recent years, can be used by junior surgeons to practise laparoscopic (keyhole) operations. They now even allow the surgeon to feel the tension of the tissues being handled and, if not enough care is taken, they tear and bleed as in real life.

Mr Greg Wynn, pictured below, a general and colorectal surgeon based at Colchester General Hospital, is developing a training scheme that will use two £140,000 simulators at the Medical Simulation Centre at London’s Royal Free Hospital.

His ambition is for the same equipment to be provided at the ICENI Centre, the new training and research and development centre for laparoscopic surgery that has just been built at Colchester General Hospital. It opens next month.

Welcome!

LINDSAY YOUNG is the newly-appointed clinical nurse specialist for tissue viability and can be contacted on ext 6052.

REBECCA PULFORD has moved this month from her head of nursing post to service manager for maternity and gynaecology.

Farewell Padders!

Wasantha Padmi Mallawa-Arachi – "PADDERS" – has retired. She started at the Trust in 1970 as a nursing auxiliary at St Mary’s Hospital and then became an enrolled nurse. For the majority of her career she has worked nights on care of the elderly wards at Myland, Essex County and St Mary’s hospitals, and finally Gainsborough Wing, Colchester General Hospital.

Padders will be greatly missed by her friends on D’Arcy Ward who wish her well in her retirement.

Come on Louise!

Radiology secretary LOUISE CORNISH will attempt the London Marathon next April, raising money for the Blue Cross Animal Charity. She runs a beginners’ running club on Saturday mornings for £4 per session, or £17.50 for five sessions for NHS staff. So if you have never run before and feel intimidated by joining a “serious” running group, then this club might be what you are looking for. For details email: louise.cornish@colchesterhospital.nhs.uk

Well done!

Pathology’s NEALE MUNSON has received an award in the Health Enterprise East Innovation Competition. He designed software to connect the Trust’s Pathology analysers to the lab computer system, resulting in savings to the Trust.

Mortuary and Bereavement Services Manager GUY SINGLETON has achieved an Msc in death, bereavement and human tissue studies from Staffordshire University.

Nurse Consultant JOANNE TONKIN was awarded a prestigious travel bursary to attend the American Society of Hematology conference in Orlando, Florida, this month.

Professor Khaled congratulates JOHN HOWARD on his appointment of visiting professor from the University of Essex School of Health and Human Sciences. Mr Howard is the deputy dean and Postgraduate GP Dean of the East of England Deaney, with whom the Trust has close links.

CLARE BAILEY, pictured above, has started a new role as Trust-wide Smoking Cessation Facilitator to help the Trust refer 4,000 people to the Colchester and Tendring Stop Smoking Support Service by 31 March. They can be patients, staff and even the friends and family of staff living in either Colchester or Tendring. After a referral is made, the stop smoking service will contact the person directly. If you want help to stop smoking or would like to refer a patient, family member or friend, visit: www.colchesterhospital.nhs.uk/stop_smoking.shtml

Staff can read these stories in full on the Trust’s new intranet’s Forums, under ‘People News’: http://intranet.rde.local

Watch Mr Wynn’s virtual bowel operation on YouTube

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rjCNHwrK0
The ground floor consists of a 28-bed Children’s Ward, a Children’s Elective Care Unit, Children’s Acute Referral Unit and a Children’s Outpatients Department. Supporting facilities include a children’s dining room, a school room and administrative offices, as well as better facilities for parents. It has been designed in a child-centred way and features multi-coloured and patterned flooring, walls in bright colours, murals and a distinctive design for the reception and nurses’ station, which has created a cheerful and non-institutional interior. It is arranged around a large central courtyard that provides a protected play area and sensory garden. The Children’s Ward consists of four-bed bays and single rooms, with each bay and each single room having its en suite facilities. Each bed space has its own window space.
Last month, the ground floor of the new extension at Colchester General Hospital opened.

Comprising 5,600 square metres, the £20m building is two-thirds the size of the original hospital building and is one of the biggest capital projects at Colchester General Hospital since it opened in 1985.

The first floor has a new surgical ward (Mersea Ward) and a new Elective Care Centre, along with an extension to the Isolation Unit. It will be occupied from 18 December.

This is a very positive development for acute hospital care in north east Essex, resulting in state-of-the-art facilities for patients, staff and visitors.
We offer a wide range of healthcare services and we want to know which interest you as a Trust member. Please circle up to 10 choices, complete the form, cut it out and return it to the Freepost address on the back page.

Colchester Hospital Charity works to improve patient care

**A message from Sir John Ashworth**

People often tell me how much they appreciate the care of the Trust’s staff. Whether they are patients or their friends and family, they are grateful for the kindness and hard work of the people they meet at our hospitals.

You may be aware that the Trust’s work is supported by its own charity, CoHoC. The charity’s aim is to work with the Trust to enhance and improve patient care by providing grants to projects and services that are above and above those funded by the NHS, improving the environment and buying medical equipment.

We all know that in the present financial climate there are difficult choices to be made about how to spend NHS budgets. So it is reassuring to know that in special cases it is possible to call on CoHoC to buy additional pieces of equipment and amenities that will help our staff deliver the high-quality care that patients expect and our staff strive to deliver.

CoHoC’s motto is “making your hospitals even better”. If you would care to make a donation large or small it will help us achieve that aim and provide amenities and equipment that make such a difference to your hospitals.

Thank you!

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1. Sir John Ashworth is Chairman of the Charitable Funds Committee

2. Please send your donation to Sir John Ashworth, Colchester Hospitals Charity, Fundraising Office, Trust HQ, Turner Road, Colchester, CO4 5JL

I enclose a £………… cheque, CAF voucher or postal order made payable to:

**Colchester Hospitals Charity**

Or, please debit £……… from my Visa/ MasterCard/ Switch/ CAF Card (delete as appropriate)

Card number _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _

Three-digit security number _ _ _

Switch issue number _ _

Start date _ / _ / _ Expiry date _ / _ / _

Your signature………………………………………..

Today’s date _ / _ / _

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**Gift Aid declaration**

*Add 28p to each £1 you give, at no extra cost to you, by ticking the box.*

- I would like Colchester Hospitals Charity to claim Gift Aid on all donations I have made for the last four years and on all my future donations. I understand that I must be paying income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount reclaimed by the Charity and that I can cancel this Gift Aid declaration at anytime by writing to the Charity.

- I do / do not* wish to receive more information about fundraising.

(* delete as appropriate.)
Tan is Essex lead for bowel cancer pilot

A Colchester surgeon has been appointed as the Essex lead for a regional trial that has been designed to reduce the number of deaths from bowel cancer.

Mr Tan Arulampalam, pictured, a consultant laparoscopic surgeon based at Colchester General Hospital, took up the four-month post on 1 December.

The trial is to encourage people with what may be the symptoms of the condition to go to their GP.

Mr Arulampalam’s role will involve encouraging GPs in the Essex Cancer Network area to refer these patients to hospital for tests.

“To get England’s cancer survival rates up to the best in Europe we have to diagnose the disease at an earlier stage,” he said. “It has been estimated that 1,700 lives could be saved a year in England just by bringing our survival rate up to the best.”

As well as being a surgeon at the Trust, Mr Arulampalam is also a member of the seven-strong Medical Board of the charity Beating Bowel Cancer.

Top five tips for keeping warm and well

A booklet has been produced by the Department of Health to help people maintain good health during winter and take advantage of the financial help and benefits available. The leaflet highlights five top tips:

1 Heat your home well. By setting your heating to the right temperature (18–21°C or 64–70°F), you can keep your home warm and your bills as low as possible.

2 Get financial support.

There are grants, benefits and sources of advice available to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help with bills. It’s worthwhile claiming all the benefits you are entitled to.

3 Eat well.

Food is a vital source of energy, which helps to keep your body warm. Try to make sure that you have hot meals and drinks regularly throughout the day.

4 Get a flu jab.

You can get a free jab from your GP to protect against seasonal flu if you are over 65, have a long-term health condition or are pregnant.

5 Look after yourself and others.

On cold days, try to avoid going outside. However, if you need to, remember to wrap up warm. If you have an older neighbour or relative, look out for them during winter to make sure that they are safe and well.

Public health White Paper

On 30 November the Department of Health published the public health White Paper.

“Healthy lives, healthy people: Our strategy for public health in England” is the seventh consultation on the Government’s planned reforms of the NHS (Liberating the NHS).

It outlines the Government’s commitment to protect the population from serious health threats; helping people live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives; and improving the health of the poorest, fastest.

The Government will be consulting until 8 March.

Broomfield Hospital’s new phone number

Mid Essex Hospitals has changed its phone numbers back to local codes from 0844.

Switchboard number is 01245 443673

Appointments line is 01245 513900.

Prosthetic User Group launch listening buddy scheme

The Colchester Hospital Prosthetic User Group (CPUG) has this month launched its listening buddy scheme. The group is for anyone with limb loss, or any of the prosthetic clinic patients and their carers who attend Colchester General Hospital.

Chairman Graham Facey said: “We understand how difficult it is to lose a limb and the impact it has on people’s lives. We also understand how this trauma affects our families and friends, who may sometimes feel at a loss as to how to help us. We hope to be able to offer support from our own personal experiences.”

The listening buddy scheme allows CPUG members to discuss areas of concern about their health and to gain help and advice from people in a similar situation to themselves. All prospective listening buddies undergo CRB checks and sign a confidentiality agreement before being allowed to undertake visits.

CPUG’s next open forum meeting is on 23 February. Find out more at the Prosthetic User Group’s own website:

www.colchesterhospitalpug.co.uk

A full list of Mid Essex Hospitals Trust’s phone numbers can be found on the website at www.meht.nhs.uk
What am I a “member” of exactly?

You may be wondering what “being a member” means. It’s often described as the future of the organisation as it means local people and staff – members – can have a greater say in how their local hospitals are run.

The benefit of being an NHS Foundation Trust is that they are at the heart of a patient-led NHS, are not subject to direction from central government and are able to direct their services closely to the communities they serve.

That’s why we encourage people who live in Essex and Suffolk to get involved by becoming public members. And it is why we automatically enrol our NHS employees as staff members along with our partner Carillion’s employees and our voluntary workers.

We have 7,206 public members, which together with the 3,619 staff members, represent our catchment area’s population.

Membership is free and gives people a voice when the Trust discusses the future of NHS hospital services in north east Essex. This is done through the Trust’s elected Members’ Council, one of the key elements of an NHS Foundation Trust. The Members’ Council is a mixture of staff and public governors and other major stakeholders, such as NHS North East Essex.

Members are able to stand for election on the Council and vote for the governor who will then represent them. The Trust has 15 members of the public as governors and five members of staff representing different professions and occupations at the Trust. The next elections will be held next spring – see page 5.

Meanwhile, ask people you know to become members because we want people who use our hospital services to recommend us to their family and friends.

People can apply online or pick up a leaflet at either of our hospitals’ main reception desks. The form has even got a Freepost return address so you won’t have to pay for a stamp!

To become a new member, please contact the Membership Helpline, at foot of back page

Or look on the Trust website’s home page, under “Click us to become a Member”: www.colchesterhospital.nhs.uk

New service can help patients to a better life

A new nurse-led service has been launched to help patients at Colchester General Hospital with a diagnosis of heart failure. It means that patients are being seen quicker than in the past when they had to wait for an appointment with the heart failure service provided by NHS North East Essex.

Heart failure is a serious condition which occurs when the heart is having trouble pumping enough blood around the body. This is usually because the heart muscle has become too weak or stiff to work properly.

The service at Colchester General Hospital is provided by a team (pictured) of five cardiac nurse specialists, led by Lynda Keating and devised by Dr Allan Harkness, lead consultant cardiologist at the Trust.
Come to free health talks by our experts

Every month, the Trust FT Membership Office organises a free evening talk about a health topic relevant to today’s lifestyle.

Free and open to the public, the talks are presented by a leading doctor or other healthcare professionals.

On Wednesday 26 January the topic will be stroke with Consultants Dr Ramachandran Sivakumar and Dr Rajesh Saksena discussing why the Stroke Unit at Colchester General Hospital is one of the best in the country.

And in February it will be ward sister Carrie Tyler talking about the her award-winning distraction therapy Tiptree Box devised for patients with dementia. The box has been shown to reduce falls, anxiety and dehydration and is a cafe-style activity table, originally piloted in 2006 by Carrie and fellow nurse Helen Langthorne. It contains items to distract patients with dementia or who have become confused as a result of illness.

All the talks for 2011 are listed “In the Diary”, on the right. For full details, see our website. For the talk’s exact location, call the Membership Helpline (see back page).

THIS MONTH’S GRAPH

VTE, or venous thromboembolism, has been recognised as a clinical priority by the Trust with the aim that 90 per cent of admitted adult patients are VTE risk assessed by the end of December. At the end of November the Trust had reached 70 per cent – all down to the hard work of staff. Source: VTE newsletter, December 2010

Visit the page “How long will I wait” on Trust website: www.colchesterhospital.nhs.uk

You can also see monthly reports on our website under “Board Meetings”
As we approach the end of another year we tend to reflect on what we achieved and then start to think about what the next year might hold for us. I started 2010 applying to be a non-executive director and ended the year as the Chief Executive. I did not imagine either would come true this time last year – it’s been quite a year!

The past four months have flown by. I have been repeatedly struck by the passion and professionalism of our staff. The first reinforcement of this was the Great Bentley major incident in my second week. The rapid and calm coordinated action of the multi-disciplinary team was remarkable.

A more recent example has been the way our staff have braved the winter weather to keep our hospitals running.

The next impression is of a workforce that is adaptable, flexible and able to take on significant changes. The opening of the new extension at Colchester General Hospital (see pages 8 and 9) is a good example of this, as is the reconfiguration of our surgical pathway. Whilst these are of course very positive changes, at a personal level change of any kind requires energy and it takes time.

The third impression is of an increasing openness. An openness to give ideas, to make suggestions and to challenge. We are learning to do this gradually and this will still determine how well and how quickly we can adapt to the environment and become a truly outstanding hospital.

At the end of last month, we had a very productive meeting with the PCT to look at the emergency pathway for patients, to make sure the right patients present into A&E and the Emergency Assessment Unit; that they are treated in an efficient way while in hospital; and that they are then discharged appropriately and safely. There was a very constructive discussion and we will work together to tackle winter bed pressures. In addition, because of the new extension we have already created extra capacity which will allow us to expand our bed capacity temporarily, if required.

Last month, we presented details to NHS East of England of our focus on efficiency, quality and partnership. It is evident that we have made great progress in efficiency gains in emergency care, length of stay of patients and day case surgical rates. However, we can improve further, specifically in outpatient efficiency and theatre productivity. So, in the New Year we will begin a 12-week project to find ways to improve productivity in all of our theatres.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your support and to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Dr Gordon Coutts | Chief Executive
Letters | Emails

Your views

“Very kind and considerate”
I just wanted to thank everyone who was involved with my mum, who sadly passed way in Langham Ward, on 3 December. When she was first admitted she was unconscious and was not expected to make it through the night. She was moved to the Emergency Assessment Unit where she was looked after by Mike, Helen and Michelle. They were all very kind and considerate and cared for mum in a very professional way. She was then moved to Langham Ward where she was looked after by Nicky, who was also very kind and considerate.

My sister, brother and I stayed with mum for two nights and the staff made us as comfortable as possible and even though they were always running around they made time to make us cups of tea.

We also noticed how clean your hospital is and we had a couple of meals in your canteen which were very nice.

Thanks again for everything you did for my mum – it was really appreciated.

Mandy Evans, by email

Reply: It is always gratifying to read emails like yours and to know that the work of staff in the NHS is appreciated as we know it can be an effort to write at a time like this. All letters of praise are passed to the staff concerned.

Questions, questions, questions
I was a patient in Dedham Ward. It was an excellent ward but I did notice the nurses were rushing around taking individual medication sheets to the desk. Surely it would be more efficient to take six sheets at a time? The medicine round would then be less of a dash.

Also on reaching Accident and Emergency by ambulance I could hardly speak, but was asked so many questions to fill in my medical history. This questionnaire was repeated at the Emergency Assessment Unit, Dedham Ward and twice at Basildon Hospital. Surely it would save nursing time and money to photo-copy the original and issue copies when needed?

June Fairley
Tendring

Helen Krysinski, A&E Matron replies: All patients who come through A&E and are transferred to wards have a copy of the casualty cards sent with them. Patients are asked the same questions in A&E as the ambulance, but it is necessary for the medical staff ask a more comprehensive history.

Major incident at Aingers Green
As a public member and a casualty of the major incident on 8 October at Aingers Green, Great Bentley, I, and I am sure others who were injured, would like to pass on grateful thanks to all staff and doctors at Colchester General Hospital and at the scene for their exemplary actions. One could not wish for more care, concern, and efficiency.

Please pass on to those involved that they should be held in the highest regard.

Mr A G Goldsmith
Frinton-on-Sea

NVQ Centre
Thanks so much for the coverage you have given us in last month’s copy (Celebrating huge rise in NVQs, page 12). It has done the learners and team justice.

Hayley Brown, NVQ Centre Manager
NVQ Office, Training Rooms South

WRITE TO: Mainstream Editor
Trust HQ, Colchester General Hospital

EMAIL: info@colchesterhospital.nhs.uk
An “inspiration to us all”

An “inspiration to us all” is how a Colchester cancer specialist describes a Dovercourt businessman who is a double world champion – despite having prostate cancer.

At the end of a recent check-up at Colchester General Hospital, Terry Howlett showed consultants Dr Bruce Sizer and Mr John Corr the gold medal he brought back from the over-65s hockey World Cup in South Africa in September.

It was the second time that he had become a world champion since being diagnosed with cancer more than two years ago – the first was in 2008 when the England over-60s became world champions in Hong Kong.

In between, in 2009, he played in the over-65s England team that won the European Championship in the Netherlands and has no plans to retire from the sport that he first took up over half-a-century ago as an 11-year-old Harwich schoolboy.

Terry had radiotherapy at Essex County Hospital in 2009 and continues with hormone treatment in order to manage his tumour.

He has regular check-ups at the Trust where his care has been led by consultant oncologist Dr Sizer and consultant urologist Mr Corr.

Dr Sizer said: “We were delighted that at his recent review Terry looked so well and we were extremely impressed when he produced his gold medal at the end of the consultation.

He is an excellent example of how well many men with prostate cancer often are, and how important it is to maintain their normal interests – especially if they are international sportsmen! Terry is an inspiration to us all.”

Terry said: “Dr Sizer and Mr Corr have always been keen for me to keep the exercise going and have been very encouraging because they see it very much as a positive thing. I didn’t tell my team-mates about my prostate problem until after we won the World Cup in Hong Kong because I wanted to get into the side purely on merit, rather than because people were feeling sorry for me.

“I take the view that there are many people out there worse off than me and I am determined to carry on playing hockey as long as I can because I have had so much fun down the years. As each new tournament comes up, it gives me a new goal to aim for.”

Read the full story on our website, under “Latest News”:
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