Purr-fect outcome for allergy patient

As spring begins, so does allergy season – and as one of the few clinics in the UK to offer immunotherapy, the allergy services team at the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital (RNTNEH) are leading the way in helping sufferers.

In immunotherapy, small doses of the allergen in question are administered to the patient in incremental amounts. This teaches the body to accept what the patient is allergic to, gradually building up a tolerance that can change the patient’s life.

The immunotherapy team – Dr Joanna Lukawska, clinical nurse specialist David Thursfield and staff nurse Diwantee Cleary (pictured below) – have treated more than 100 patients since they started offering the treatment in 2014. So far, response rates have been excellent, as Joanna explains: “Around 90 per cent of hay fever patients will get very good results from immunotherapy, while 98 per cent of patients with wasp venom allergies will be protected from stings.”

One patient whose life was changed by the team is Jack Kirby (pictured right with his grandma’s cat). Since the age of four, he had suffered allergy-triggered asthma brought on by cats. It was so severe that he had to avoid all contact with the animals, turning down invitations to friends’ homes if they had cats. Jack tried various coping mechanisms, even training as a yoga teacher to help him breathe through allergy attacks, but the problem remained: “I taught classes in private homes, but some of them had cats and inevitably I’d have a reaction and have to leave.”

His doctor referred him to RNTNEH as the allergy was affecting him so severely. Jack had a course of weekly injections and now comes to the hospital every four weeks or so for a top-up. The results are outstanding, as he says: “I can now spend time in the company of cats and even stroke them without having a reaction.”

“I’m very thankful to the allergy team for the amazing work that they do.”
The Exemplar Ward assessments are now in full swing at the NHNN, and here are some reassuring words of advice for those colleagues involved in the first wave of inspections.

“You may think it sounds a little nerve-wracking,” said ward sister Jane Sproat, “but once it starts you’ll realise the process is really worthwhile. Having gone through it I can honestly say ‘I believe in this’.”

NHNN charge nurse Dean Morris agrees: “It provides a good structure for quality improvement. Everyone in the multi-disciplinary team has to be engaged in the process for the best results. That’s vital!”

T7 charge nurse Matt Chapman added: “It’s a really useful way to find out where you need to focus. It’s an excellent opportunity.”

And they should know. Jane and the urology team at Westmoreland Street (3rd Floor Inpatient Ward) and Dean and the John Young Ward at the NHNN were part of the initial Exemplar Ward pilot, along with T7.

Jane added: “It confirmed what we knew deep down: we were doing some things well and deserved praise. But other areas were not so good. The best bit is that we are sharing ideas, supporting developments in practice and looking to continue to support each other through to our reassessments.”

For example, the Westmoreland Street team have adapted a checklist used by T7 to support documentation, as part of their bedside nursing handover.

In the coming months, every ward in UCLH will be assessed and accredited as good, great, and outstanding or in need of more support to improve, as part of the uclh future programme. More information on Insight
We’ve got fundraising fever!

Whether they are trekking in the Andes, cycling in the Yorkshire dales or pounding the pavements of London, our staff, patients and supporters are springing into action to support UCLH charities. Between them they’ll raise tens of thousands of pounds towards treatments, equipment and research for the benefit of our patients. Here’s a quick look at just some of the highlights for the months ahead…

UCL Hospitals Charitable Foundation


Why? As well as raising vital funds, it’s a great chance to enjoy four Royal Parks and the iconic landmarks of the capital Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, the London Eye, Marble Arch and the Royal Albert Hall.

Who’ll benefit? UCL Hospitals Charitable Foundation raises money to fund a wide range of projects across UCLH such as research nurses for various clinical trial projects, research into lung cancer and support for the Fetal Medicine Unit and the Young Person’s Unit.

Interested? In 2016 we have many exciting fundraising events lined up – visit uclcharitablefoundation.org.uk for information. To take part in the Royal Parks Half Marathon contact hannah.persaud@uclh.nhs.uk

National Brain Appeal

What? Staff, patients, families and friends are among the 22 runners taking part in the Virgin Money London Marathon to raise funds. Watched by crowds of thousands, they’ll include first-time marathon runners clinical psychologist Katie Herron and senior information analyst Sean Hession. Patient Virginia Goldsack, who is undergoing treatment for a brain tumour, is also competing.

Why? Each runner can fund a particular NHNN/Institute of Neurology research project close to their heart such as the new Rare Dementia Support fund or its work on MS or Parkinson’s.

Selling points? Support of a dedicated National Brain Appeal team member, a pre- and post-marathon reception, fortnightly hints and tips, a fundraising pack and a cheer team on the day.

Interested? To apply for next year’s London Marathon, email brooke.parsons@uclh.nhs.uk

To donate to the National Brain Appeal visit https://www.justgiving.com/tnba

Cyclotopia for three good causes

What? Cyclotopia: An amazing, action-packed bike bonanza at Lee Valley VeloPark on Sunday 12 June. Enjoy cycling the road circuit and exciting mountain trails and try 75-minute track sessions with expert coaches in the iconic Velodrome. Spectators welcome!

Why? To raise money for UCLH charity funds Haematology Cancer Care (HCC), Breathing Matters (BM) and Rays of Hope (RoH). More than £60,000 has been raised from previous events.

Who’ll benefit? The HCC funds education programmes for haematology nurses and provides free complementary therapy for patients and front line staff; the BM is funding pioneering cryoscope equipment to diagnose pulmonary fibrosis without invasive treatment – a UK first and RoH fund innovative radiotherapy treatments for younger patients.

Selling points It’s fun, it’s great for families and gold-medal-winning Paralympic champion Mark Colbourne (pictured left) will be giving entrants some top tips on the day. Bikes and helmets provided.

“Whizzing round the Olympic indoor and outdoor tracks are experiences that are not to be missed by anyone who likes the occasional pedal,” said veteran cyclist and thoracic medicine consultant Professor Jerry Brown.

Interested? www.uclcharity.org.uk/cyclotopia (Velodrome places sell out fast.)
What? Around 40 staff – half from UCLH and half from The Christie – are taking part in a 220-mile cycle ride from the Christie in Manchester to London in just two days (17 and 18 June).

Why? They aim to raise at least £10,000 towards the UK’s only NHS high energy proton beam therapy (PBT) centres. While the build and operational costs of the centres are entirely funded by government money, UCLH hopes to raise £10 million to make our centre the very best it can be.

Who’ll benefit? Our cancer patients. All the money raised will support the UCLH and Christie PBT Centres to provide the very latest equipment and furnishings.

How did the ride come about? “We have a number of very keen cyclists from the UCLH project team – from capital investment, radiotherapy, finance and strategic development,” explains Steve Last, project accountant. “There’s a fair bit of banter and rivalry. It’s a challenging ride with lots of steep hills through the Peak District. Obviously, we will all be supporting each other to finish the ride – regardless of aches and pains.”

Interested? Unfortunately applications have now closed. However, if it’s successful there will be others. You can sponsor your colleagues via Just Giving - https://www.justgiving.com/ManchestertoLondonPBTRide2016

ISEH run for UCH Cancer Fund

What? A brilliant 5k and 10k run organised by the Institute for Sport Exercise and Health (ISEH) on Sunday 26 June at 10am, supported by UCH Cancer Fund and England Athletics. The route is flat so ideal for all ages and fitness levels. There is also a 2.5K route you can walk or jog.

Why? It’s a great way to get active – something we’re passionate about here at the ISEH. The run is open to all and you can choose to raise money for UCH Cancer Fund or for the charity of your choice.

Who’ll benefit? UCH Cancer Fund aims to enhance the patient environment and support new technologies to improve treatments and staff training to encourage personal development. For more information visit uchcancerfund.org.uk

Selling points? Regent’s Park is breathtaking in the summer. What’s more, you’ll get to meet Olympic marathon runner Mara Yamauchi who will officially start the race. There will be a medal for all finishers and a warm up with celebrity fitness guru Matt Miller. London Athletics are providing free training sessions to help you prepare for the run.

Interested? Sign up via the ISEH webpages www.iseh.co.uk
60 seconds with... Lily Pebbles

What’s your top tip for becoming an Instagram star?
Take photos of things you absolutely love and your passion will come across. Build a bigger following by being consistent: posting once or twice a day will encourage people to follow, like and share your account.

Why do you support TCT?
Being a teenager is tough enough as it is and it’s vital to acknowledge that teens are not kids and they shouldn’t have to be treated like them. When they feel at their most scared and vulnerable, Teenage Cancer Trust knows exactly how to be there.

Bloggers have a huge young fan base. Why?
YouTube is what TV was for me when I was a teenager, but even better. It’s this huge online community filled with all kinds of personalities sharing their own stories and teenagers have grown up with this and I think it’s amazing. Watching your favourite YouTuber can feel just like sitting and chatting to a friend.

Your hair always looks amazing. What’s your secret?
I grew up with the most frizzy, difficult hair so any hair compliments always make me chuckle. I use a lot of heat, so I use hair masks and heat protectors. I love to add in soft waves using straighteners. I also love to just throw it up into a scruffy bun at home.

What’s your visit to UCLH been like?
It’s been amazing. It’s been really nice chatting to the patients. They’re just normal teenagers and I’ve bonded with them over Instagram and YouTube.

Spotlight on research

UCLH and UCL are at the forefront of exciting research which could change the lives of thousands of patients with cancer and multiple sclerosis. Supported by the NIHR University College London Hospitals Biomedical Research Centre, the projects have been attracting widespread media attention.

Tumours can destroy themselves
UCL and UCLH researchers have discovered that every cancer cell contains one ‘flag’ that could be used to get a patient’s immune system to attack all cancer cells simultaneously. Researcher Professor Charles Swanton, UCLH consultant, said: “This is exciting. We can prioritise and target the Achilles heel of these highly complex cancers.”

First maternal gene therapy trial to start
We’re set to trial the first clinical use of gene therapy during pregnancy. The trial will focus on mothers suffering from foetal growth restriction, where the placenta provides insufficient nutrients and oxygen to grow the baby. Dr Anna David, UCLH consultant in obstetrics and maternal and fetal medicine, said: “We hope the therapy will reduce stillbirths and neonatal deaths and improve neonatal and long-term outcomes for affected babies.”

Cannabis-mimicking MS drug trial starts at UCLH
We’re trialling a drug that can help reduce the spasticity associated with MS by mimicking the properties of cannabis – without its sedative effects. Dr Rachel Farrell, consultant at the NHNN, is leading the study. She said: “Participants are only dosed for a four-week period which is enough to show whether the drug, VSN16R, impacts on spasticity. We hope to have the trial completed within a year.”

First evidence suggests that ovarian cancer screening may save lives
UCLH and UCL co-led the world’s biggest ovarian cancer screening trial and results suggest that screening based on an annual blood test may help reduce the number of women dying from the disease by around 20 per cent. The research team is now following up the study. Professor Usha Menon, UCLH consultant gynaecologist, said: “Finally we have data which suggests that screening may prevent ovarian cancer deaths. This is welcome news and provides fresh impetus for renewed efforts in this area.”
The nurses of ’64 then… and now

When they began their nurse training at University College Hospital in the 1960s, few of the young women from Set 164 could have envisaged that more than 50 years later the ties of friendship would remain strong.

Memories of their youth are captured in a new book about their early life in the NHS: from fascinating photographs of uniforms and copies of old exam papers to documents about the rules and regulations of living in the nurses’ home. No men were allowed above the ground floor, sunbathing was permitted on the roof and the visitors sitting room was dubbed ‘the passion parlour’ which was locked at night!

Heather O’Neill, editor and former nurse, said: “I think nurses of today would find it interesting to see how life was ‘way back then’ and I hope it captures the fun and mischief we had at work — even though there was strict discipline and regard for authority.”

The book (price £21.70 plus postage £1.68) is available from heather_m_oneill@hotmail.com

The UCH London Nurses’ Charity recently launched a new web page. This provides information about the charity and how you can get involved: www.uclh.nhs.uk/UCHLondonNursesCharity

A portrait of our working lives

The work of our staff is being immortalised in a series of images by photo journalist Graeme Weston as part of a special project commissioned by UCLH Arts and Heritage.

Celebrating the diversity of our workforce is one of the aims, said Graeme adding: “I also want to emphasise the aspects of working in healthcare that are universal — dedication, concentration, love, commitment and care, to name but a few. These values bind us all together and foster a sense of solidarity, regardless of background and culture.”

We’ll be publishing more staff photos in future issues. If you are interested in being part of the project email arts.heritage@uclh.nhs.uk
Inside out

It’s the start of your working day. As you arrive at UCLH, you hear a loud zooming noise. You turn around and, in a flash, a leather-clad motorcyclist zooms past you, looking like the coolest person on the Euston Road. That brilliant biker is none other than Laurie Hayes, online development communications officer, arriving for work.

Laurie’s been riding motorbikes for three years, having turned a practical concern – the need to find a faster way to commute – into a true passion. He started his two-wheeled life whizzing to work and back on a scooter. Now, he rides a Yamaha MT07, a 700cc bike that can do 0-60 in under four seconds, and biking isn’t just for his commute – it’s a daily pleasure.

Laurie says: “I’m on the bike as much as possible at the weekends. When the weather is good I’ll take it to the track and race it, or I’ll stick my girlfriend on the back and ride around Richmond Park.”

“Biking has changed my life not just because of getting involved, it gives you freedom.”

This summer, Laurie hopes to ride to Italy to visit family, crossing the Dolomites on his Yamaha. “I’ll have to go solo because it’s not safe enough to ride on the mountains with my girlfriend on the back,” he explains, before admitting that he hasn’t actually told his girlfriend about this trip yet.

Should his girlfriend take umbrage, Laurie can find solace in the company of his fellow bikers. One of the things he loves most about his hobby is the biking community, who he chats with online on biking sites and meets in real life in leathers; he’s a regular at Loomies a bikers’ café in Hampshire. He laughs: “I stand around in cafés with other men looking at each other’s bikes.”

After they’ve finished standing around, the guys will often take off for an impromptu group trip. He says: “Biking has changed my life not just because of the social aspect, it also gives you freedom. You can put on a rucksack or put a bag on the bike and travel somewhere and be anywhere within a couple of hours.”

As for the more mundane matter of the daily journey to work, even that’s been turned into a joy for Laurie: “Most people dread their commute. I look forward to mine every day. I’d encourage people to get on two wheels, even if it’s not a fast bike, because it’s economical, quicker and you can start your day with a smile.”

Launch of new website pages for patients

As part of his role as online development communications officer, Laurie Hayes (see Secret Lives above) is working with clinical teams and patients to develop new websites to provide a range of useful information. The newly launched urological cancers website www.uclh.nhs.uk/UrologicalCancers includes patient stories, information about treatment options and pathways and links to charities and support services. There is also a ‘meet the team’ section.

Other website pages are in the pipeline, including maternity and head and neck cancer.

Love the archive? Follow UCLH on instagram for more archive gems at https://www.instagram.com/uclh