Inside Story
August 2008

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Inside Story is the UCLH staff magazine
Telecommunications upgrade for UCLH

One of the country’s most technically advanced telephone systems is set to put UCLH at the forefront of communication in the NHS.

The system includes new technology to dramatically cut the number of misdirected calls and the feelings of frustration sometimes felt by staff and patients.

Upgrading the speech recognition system will increase the hit rate and ease the burden on the trust switchboard operators who deal with an amazing 50,000 calls a month – 40% of which are internal calls.

Joan St Hill, assistant director of ICT, said: “Staff will be able to record their own name including alternative pronunciations. We hope it will encourage staff to make contact using the voice recognition options rather than via the switchboard. This will free up the switchboard to concentrate on patients and devote their time to dealing with external calls.”

Handsets will be upgraded with full training available to update staff on the new functions. Voicemail for mobiles and office phones will eventually be merged.

Individual departments will be more directly in control of their call charges with call logger reports being available on Insight, the trust intranet, at department and device handset level. Staff with trust mobiles will be given access to a new system which will simplify the process of paying for any personal calls.

The new facilities and systems will be managed by Azzurri Communications Ltd, who will audit and review the trust bills and predict the contract will cut over 15% off the trust’s costs over the next seven years.

For training on the system call the Telecoms Service Desk, which will now be manned 24 hours a day, on ext 8888.

Memories of the EGA

More than 250 past and present members of staff from the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (EGA) and Obstetric Hospital gathered to share their memories – just months before the hospital moves to its new home.

A reunion party was held on July 12 to celebrate the end of an era as staff prepare to move into the new £70 million EGA wing – phase 2 of the University College Hospital (UCH) rebuild – which will provide specialist maternity and gynaecology services.

Story available on Insight.

Staff nurse Rose says farewell

Staff nurse Rose Lynch was weighed down with gifts when she said farewell to colleagues at the neuro rehabilitation unit after 38 years at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery.

“I felt really moved particularly when they presented me with flowers and champagne on the night shift. I wasn’t expecting it. It was lovely – they spoilt me rotten,” said Rose.

Rose worked at the unit when it was based in East Finchley for 30 years before moving to Queen Square.

Along with acting ward manager Irene Hegerty, she took the lead in fundraising during the transition from East Finchley and raised £15,000 over five years.

Irene said: “Rose has been a great friend and work colleague as well as being an inspirational role model for the staff on the unit. She will be greatly missed by all the staff and patients.”

Another colleague Ewan Alexander said: “She would always go the extra mile for her patients and colleagues and was respected across the whole hospital.”

Contact Us

If you have any information you would like included in Inside Story, or on the trust intranet site Insight, contact: Communications Unit, 2nd Floor Central, 250 Euston Road, London NW1 2PG. Email: communications@uclh.nhs.uk, Tel: ext 9897, Fax: ext 9401
Youngest doctor joins UCLH

High-flying Heenal Raichura – believed to be Britain’s youngest doctor – started work at UCLH this month at the tender age of 22. Heenal was just 16 when she started studying medicine at university and six years later passed her degree with flying colours. UCH was top of her list for the best place to work.

She said: “It is a very prestigious hospital and to have my name associated with it would be a pleasure. It certainly has the ‘wow!’ factor.

Heenal is working with the respiratory medicine team on T10 on a four-month placement, followed by trauma and orthopaedics and acute care. She said: “It is very exciting that I can put everything I’ve learned into practice and have the opportunity to play an important role in people’s lives and have a positive impact.”

Heenal studied medicine at St George’s University in London and anatomy and developmental biology at University College London. At the age of just nine Heenal had an IQ of 170 according to MENSA tests. She became the youngest person to start secondary school, passed her GCSE exams with flying colours at 14 and notched up four grade As and one B at A-Levels.

Since receiving her degree in Heenal has obtained a distinction in medical science. She said: “All I remember from when I was younger is wanting to be a doctor.”

New era for women’s health

A new era for women’s health has moved a step closer with the construction of the new £70m wing of University College Hospital (UCH) completing on August 5. The building, phase 2 of a £422m project to redevelop UCH which began in 2000, is called the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (EGA) wing.

It will officially open in November 2008 and offer a new choice for women, housing 39 antenatal and post-natal beds, 12 birthing rooms, two birthing pools, 15 special care beds and 17 neonatal intensive care unit cots.

The wing took 114,0435 hours to complete and is made of 4,600 cubic metres of concrete. It includes: 320 miles of cable, 248 clocks, 350 cupboards, 800 shelves, 250 mirrors and 260 worktops.

Tim Mould, UCLH clinical director for women’s health, said: “Our new building heralds a new era in caring for women from London, the UK and abroad. The state-of-the-art facilities will enhance the clinical and research skills of the Institute for Women’s Health at UCL and UCL. We are thrilled that the day to start using them is about to arrive.”

At a short ceremony outside the new EGA wing, the building was officially handed over to Health Management (UCLH) Plc (HMU), the trust’s private finance initiative partner. The building was constructed by Building Contractors Joint Venture (BCJV).

Training for staff

Staff who might benefit from brushing up their practical skills and gaining extra qualifications are being encouraged to sign up to free training.

Around 100 staff are currently studying for fully-funded National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) each year, and around 25 more are undertaking English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. The NVQ training is practice-based with assessments carried out in the workplace and the ESOL training takes place one morning a week over 6 weeks.

Those employees recruited without formal qualifications are being targeted – particularly among the 24 per cent of staff employed at Bands 1-4.

UCLH has signed up to the government’s ‘Skills Pledge’ to encourage employees to upgrade their skills and qualifications by funding their training and giving them time during the working day to learn.

Marita Brown, head of learning and development, said: “It is not compulsory for existing staff to undertake NVQs and language training but we are keen to encourage them to do so. Increasingly, new staff are tested during the selection process to ensure they have the skills and competencies required for the role – and the Skills Pledge gives existing staff access to training to ensure they don’t slip behind. It benefits them and the trust.”

Popular NVQs are health and social care; customer services; business administration; support services and pharmacy.

For more information contact Marita on ext 5145.
focus on acute surgery

Surgery pioneer leads expert team
Elke Tullett looks at the development of surgery within the acute hospital board at UCLH

Pioneering Professor Peter Harris, who was recruited to develop UCLH into an international centre for ground-breaking surgical techniques, is handpicking a team of experts within the trust and around the world.
The endovascular surgeon moved from the Royal Liverpool University Hospital to UCLH this spring and was handed a challenge – run with the dream and make it happen.
His ultimate aim is to create a team of experts from across many disciplines and specialties to push the frontiers of endovascular surgery. The multi-disciplinary endovascular team will bring together leading vascular surgeons, interventional radiologists and cardiac and neurosurgeons.
Peter (pictured) said: “There is such enthusiasm for this. So far every door I push – it opens. That’s why UCLH is such a great place to work. There is a true entrepreneurial spirit, right from the top down. It’s an entrepreneurial organisation determined to provide the best possible care but with commercial values and that’s exciting.”
A new vascular operating theatre with the some of the most sophisticated equipment in the world is due to be completed on T2 at UCH early next year and will enable the team to work together using the best of traditional scalpel-style surgery alongside endovascular surgery on all parts of the body.
Historically, vascular surgery has involved large incisions in order to place prosthetic tubes (grafts) in diseased vessels throughout the body. Endovascular surgery involves making small incisions coupled with state-of-the-art technology to place the new generation of grafts in the same vessels. This drastically improves post-operative recovery and reduces the impact of what has previously been very major surgery.
Plans for a multi-disciplinary outpatient clinic will offer patients the chance to access all the experts in one visit. In most cases it will be possible to complete the most important diagnostic tests and to provide treatment advice all on the same day.
Peter said: “At the beginning of my time as a surgeon it was all about big incisions, long, dramatic operations and the skill of an individual surgeon. Now the emphasis is on small, minimally invasive operations and team work to combine the skills of different disciplines.”
In the near future, he and his team hope to carry out a tricky operation to replace the arch of the aorta – the main blood vessel closest to the heart and brain.
“The aortic arch been described as the ‘seat of the soul’ because its positioning to the heart and brain is so crucial. We are working towards replacing the arch using safer minimally invasive techniques which will avoid the necessity for big incisions, profound cooling of the body and arrest of the heart.”

Live on the world stage – our surgeons in the spotlight
Delegates from around the world will be watching our team of urology surgeons in action during a series of live operations at UCH in September. It follows a similar event earlier this year which showcased eight operations involving innovative surgical techniques not performed anywhere else in the UK. For instance, extraperitoneal laparoscopic surgery for major cancers which unlike normal keyhole surgery, enters the body while avoiding the major organs. The St Peter’s International State of the Art in Urology was previously held in New York. UCLH is now the host centre – thanks to the efforts of urology surgeons David Ralph and Hiten Patel and it enables delegates to watch live operations, ask questions and learn new techniques.
On a Monday morning, once a fortnight, surgeon Steven Olde Damink says goodbye to his wife and three young children, leaves his home in the Netherlands, jumps on the Eurostar and heads for London. By 8am he’s at UCH, scrubbed up and ready to go.

After his last operation early on Friday evening, he’s ready to take the train back home again.

UCLH recruited Steven from Maastricht University Medical Centre in February and invited him to join one of his former colleagues, chief surgeon Professor Massimo Malago who joined UCLH last September from Essen in Germany. They are both liver and pancreatic surgeons who specialise in innovative techniques to treat liver cancer and prevent liver failure following transplantation or cancer resection. Their appointments are part of the trust’s wider aim to attract experts from around Europe and the UK.

Steven is also a prominent research scientist in the field keen to forge strong links between UCLH and the leading treatment and research centre in Maastricht.

He said: “These diseases are relatively rare and collaboration will increase the patient population. It will be mutually beneficial in terms of developing scientific research trials and treatments. We aim to introduce the European approach at UCLH. In Europe we have a more aggressive approach to surgery and we are doing a lot of cases which would have been deemed to be inoperable just five years ago.”

World-leading surgeon Professor Malago uses intricate surgery to reconstruct bile ducts and blood vessels – a method which gives hope to many cancer patients whose conditions would have previously been regarded as inoperable.

He is also regarded as one of Europe’s most experienced surgeons in liver transplants from live donors – having conducted more than 400 of these operations. He performed the world’s first partial liver resection from a living donor and Europe’s first successful adult liver transplant from a live person.

Arjun Shankar, divisional clinical director for surgery, said: “We want to provide first class services to people in the local community people but also develop areas of surgical and gastroenterological expertise at an international level. We are keen to look beyond London and develop links with European units which will improve our world class research programmes and treatments.”

Recruiting female surgeons

Dr Jean McEwan, director of clinical teaching, who is involved with Improving Working Lives through the Royal College of Physicians said: “The Trust has a positive attitude and wants to encourage more women surgeons to join the team. ULCH offers a strong policy of flexible working and has a lot to offer. In some respects, surgery is ideally suited to a woman surgeon who needs a flexible approach to her working life.”

Attracting talented women to the traditionally macho world of surgery is a national challenge and one that UCLH is keen to address.

More than 60% of undergraduate doctors in the UK are now female – a 20% increase from a decade ago – but less than 9% choose surgery as a career option.

UCLH has five female surgeons within the acute hospital board. Mother-of-three Emma Taylor is a consultant orthopaedic surgeon with a special interest in hand and wrist surgery. She said she had not encountered any prejudice but the lack of women surgeons could be down to the long hours and absence of female role models.

“The department here has been very welcoming and I feel supported in my work,” said Emma. “I love my job, it’s very rewarding and very varied. For me, it’s a great job which allows me to combine a family and career.”

Emma Taylor operating on a patient’s hand

Focus on acute surgery

Channel hopping surgeons bring European expertise to UCLH

Steven Olde Damink at St Pancras International

Emma Taylor at work

Recruiting female surgeons
Leading the way on education

Professor Aidan Halligan joined UCLH around one year ago to deliver the part of the trust’s mission statement which promises ‘excellence in education’. He talked to Ian Lloyd, media relations manager.

The appointment of Professor Aidan Halligan as one of the first directors of education in the NHS was by his own admission a ‘brave’ one.

The mild-mannered Irishman joined UCLH just over a year ago after he stood down from his high profile role as the deputy Chief Medical Officer for England and Wales – the second most senior doctor in the NHS.

Part of his remit is to develop the trust’s education centre which officially opened at 250 Euston Road in June.

The centre will elevate UCLH to the forefront of learning in the NHS. It is a new and unique model for clinical education and uses role play and modern simulators – similar to those used in the airplane industry. It will support clinical training across all medical, nursing, midwifery and health professional disciplines.

Aidan describes the creation of the education centre and his role as a ‘pioneering’ yet ‘courageous’ move by the UCLH board.

“It’s about being honest and open in all that we do and applying those principles to the way we educate staff,” says Aidan who graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1984.

“There are some things which cannot be learned and can only be experienced.”

“Honesty isn’t always comfortable. But a culture that’s safe has got to have at its heart a healthy response to errors and that response dictates how, as an organisation, you will manage the unexpected which is always present in healthcare.”

One word that crops up time-after-time in conversation with Aidan is ‘patient’.

“Improving patient care has got to be our mantra – everything we do at the education centre has got to be about improving patient care. That is one of the biggest challenges for the trust in a year when we have had the best ever patient survey results and excellent staff survey results.

“We are in an age now when the access targets have been met, when winter crises seem to be a thing of the past and when we have got more doctors and nurses than ever before. This means that patients have moved beyond worrying about access to being concerned about what happens after they have made it to hospital and during their care.”

Aidan describes the relationship between patient and healthcare professional as being ‘sacrosanct’ at trusts with the reputation of UCLH.

“Occasionally that level of trust is betrayed by the poor processes and attitude at the point of contact with the trust. It is about simple things like the basic attitude of staff – whether they are kind, caring and compassionate. The level of compassion can often be tasted by patients.”

For Aidan education should be about challenging working patterns, practice and custom in the NHS for the ultimate benefit of patients. It is, as he says, the ‘articulation of the trust’s ambition to enable staff to deliver the very, very best possible patient care’.

Put simply: top quality education equals top quality patient care.

“Custom, tradition and practice would dictate that lecture-based, modular teaching is the foundation for the education we have all been exposed to over the last quarter of a century. The focus of the education centre is on experiential learning. There are some things which cannot be learnt and can only be experienced and we focus on these intangibles,” he says.

To do this the education centre, which is also a commercial venture open to other NHS trusts, will house a narrative centre where staff can hear powerful stories of people’s hospital experiences to encourage staff to assess how they might respond to difficult situations.

“Perhaps the worst experience you can have as a health care professional is to encounter an avoidable medical error of which there are a significant number across the NHS. The worst of all possible outcomes is that the error should be repeated. The education centre is there to understand why those events occur and that we move to ensure they never happen again. Every case is individual and quite different. What is remarkable is how often common themes emerge: lack of leadership, communication and team work.”

Aidan’s first year at the trust has been incredibly positive.

“The vast majority of staff here are terrific,” he says. “What has really struck me is what a nice place to work this is and the number of talented people I have come across.

“The issue for me is about people being wedded to the status quo: we are profession and organisation – centred and unconsciously and unintentionally put our own needs as individuals ahead of the needs of patients. But if we really serve our patients we will sympathise with their needs in an era when expectations have risen from what they were 20 years ago. And it’s not unreasonable to try to match those expectations.”

More on
Heart Hospital doctors revolutionise cardiac training

Three consultant anaesthetists from The Heart Hospital have developed a 3D virtual heart model which will revolutionise the teaching of cardiac anatomy.

Doctors Bruce Martin, Andrew Smith and Sue Wright have spent the last four years working on the HeartWorks project. They have enlisted the help of an impressive range of medical experts to make every aspect of the model as accurate as possible. Working with Glassworks Ltd, a computer graphics company which is more at home in the film industry, the trio have created a model of a beating human heart which can be freely rotated and sliced on screen, so that any aspect of any structure within the heart can be seen from any angle.

They have simultaneously developed a simulator for echocardiography (generating images of the heart by scanning with ultrasound). This enables the user to learn the necessary practical skills before they start scanning real patients and understand how the ultrasound images are obtained. The three doctors believe it will radically improve and speed up training.

Andrew said: “We were looking for an aid to our teaching so we could help people to understand the relationship between the 3D structure of the heart and the 2D images we would get on the screen. We really couldn’t find anything sufficiently accurate so we thought we would create our own accurate, beating, 3D model of the heart.”

Sue added: “The model is useful for training anybody that needs to know about the human heart, from surgeons to school children. In years gone by we would have had to look at pictures of the heart in textbooks to learn the anatomy, but this takes it to another level – people have never seen anything like this before.”

The two-year search for funding for the project was solved by UCLH Charity which has set up a company to manage all of the business aspects of marketing and selling the model and simulator. The complete simulator costs £50,000 and there has been considerable interest from centres in Europe and the United States with a number of firm orders.

The HeartWorks project has been making waves internationally among cardiac experts and some have described it as the most significant development in this area of anatomy since Leonardo da Vinci drew images of the heart 500 years ago.

The HeartWorks project can be seen at www.heartworks.me.uk and will be displayed in the UCH Education Centre.

Discount for staff at RLHH pharmacy

Staff can receive a 10% discount on ranges of natural and organic toiletries at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital retail pharmacy.

The selection includes toiletries suitable for sensitive and allergy prone skin. There’s Weleda baby wash (£5.95), Lavera men’s care toiletry range, shaving cream (£3.75), women’s body wash (£4.95) and lotions (£6.75) in wild berry, rose, milk and honey, vanilla and cocoa. For just £6–£10 you can also moisturise your skin with wild-crafted shea butter, plum kernel, pomegranate, rosehip seed, evening primrose, passion flower and hazelnut oils.

Claire Ranera-Dowling, the retail pharmacy manager who sourced the products, said: “These are of really high quality and don’t contain the ingredients found in most products. For instance, there is no aluminium in our deodorants or petro-chemicals in the shampoos.”

The RLHH pharmacy is open to the general public from 9am to 5.30pm weekdays and offers a mail order service. Telephone 020 7391 8805.

Sisters’ play away day

Thought-provoking issues surrounding equality and diversity issues provoked considerable debate at the recent annual Sisters’ Away Day held at the Eastman Dental Hospital.

Sisters and charge nurses were encouraged to challenge underlying assumptions and prejudices by interacting with professional actors as they played out a set of realistic hospital-based scenarios. Forum Theatre – seen by the trust as an increasingly useful learning tool – allows the audience to shape the dialogue and the outcome.

Labour ward co-ordinator Evelyn Boachie-Mensah, said: “It’s an eye-opener – it’s so subtle that it makes you realise that you are not being as aware as you should be.”

Louise Boden, chief nurse, said it was crucial that ward sisters and charge nurses felt “comfortable” with the agenda surrounding equality and diversity – particularly working in one of the most diverse cities in the world.

“We hope the away day will have given them time to explore and reflect on some of those issues,” she added.
Secret lives

Pauline is a Second Dan black belt in one of the meanest, toughest types of no-holds-barred karate where kicks and punches are allowed, with no protective gear to ward off the blows although punches to the head are banned.

Although it sounds scary Pauline insists that Kyokushin karate is not violent or dangerous but encourages discipline, calm self control and respect for others.

She first joined a karate class 11 years ago and admits: “I felt far more proud of getting my first karate belt, than getting my degree.”

Most work days she gets up at 5.15am to travel from her North London home to train at a gym near UCH. After work she’s back for another training session. Her fitness regime has had a remarkable effect on other areas of her health. “Before I started karate I suffered from asthma and could barely walk to the nearest bus stop. Now I am strong and fit,” she said.

Leaving on a jet plane

A private flight to the upmarket French seaside resort Le Touquet was enjoyed by Tom Hughes, UCLH commercially leased buildings manager, after his successful bid in a trust auction last year.

Tom took a party of three across the channel in a flight which was manned by Dr Geoff Scott, UCLH medical microbiologist, who provided the prize. It included a five-course lunch with fine wine at a top restaurant in Le Touquet.

Tom, who was allowed to man the flight for a brief period, said: “The day was one of the most memorable I will ever experience. It was adventurous, fun and scary at times, especially being in control of the aircraft at 10,000ft. The only person who was relaxed and at ease when we were in the air was Geoff!”

The group, which included Tom’s partner Clive and their close friends John and Denise, left Denham airfield at 9am and returned on 7pm the same day.

The auction in November last year was to raise money for the new UCLH cancer centre.

Archives

A wounded soldier at the Middlesex Hospital Convalescent Home at Clacton-on-Sea in Essex in 1914 (left).

The home opened in 1896 and closed in 1978. Patients and members of staff who had been ill went there to convalesce.

During World War I the Home became a military hospital. By the armistice in 1918 over 9,000 soldiers, usually straight from the front line, had been treated.

Competition

A £50 voucher for Habitat is up for grabs this month. To enter, just answer this question: What was the job title of Professor Aidan Halligan before he joined UCLH?

Email competition@uch.nhs.uk or send your answers to the Communications Unit, 2nd Floor Central, 250 Euston Road via internal post. Closing date is Monday August 8, 2008. The winner of last month’s competition was Rina Lochan.