



National Pathology Week

Pathology is involved in over 70% of diagnoses...that's 14 tests for every person in England per year!

This largely "unseen" service is crucial and our Pathology colleagues quite rightly wanted to raise the profile using National Pathology Week (2-8 November). They put on a number of events, including poster displays and organised behind the scenes visits for staff and members of the public to the hospitals' Pathology Departments.

Breast Cancer breakthrough

It's not every day that we get to announce a world first but I'm more than happy and proud to say that a team from the Trust celebrated just such a day at the beginning of November.

The pioneering breast cancer team at Maidstone have had a breakthrough in the detection of cancer that promises to prevent many thousands of women throughout the world from having to undergo repeat surgery.

This is a triumph in patient care and a reflection of the wonderful skills our staff have at MTW. My congratulations go to the whole team and in particular to Dr Ali Sever whose pioneering skills enabled this to happen.

Previously breast cancer patients had the sentinel lymph node removed from their armpit under surgery. This established whether their cancer had spread. If the sentinel node was cancerous, patients then had a second operation to remove all the nodes.

The team at Maidstone has pioneered a method in which 'microbubbles' are injected into the breast by the radiologist. These travel to the sentinel node, which can be detected under ultrasound. A fine needle biopsy can then be performed to see if the node is cancerous or not, avoiding the need for an initial operation.

The results have been presented by various members of the team to international cancer conferences in Glasgow, Berlin and San Francisco, sharing our best practice worldwide.

Midwifery Awards

In January our midwives got to the finals of the prestigious Royal College of Midwives annual midwifery awards.

Now they are going for a second try at the prize with two entries for the 2010 awards.

One is a video to help staff understand the principles behind the approach of biological nurturing to breastfeeding, and the importance of how a mother and baby interact in the first few hours after birth.

The other is the Midwives' recruitment and retention project, including a lively and accessible brochure which has helped them successfully fill their vacant posts.

Last word on the annual health survey

Two last points about last month's annual health survey, which generated such unfair headlines. It was obvious as I attended open staff meetings across the Trust that people understood, from their own experience and the briefings we produced, that the ratings do not present a fair up-to-date picture.

Secondly, I could not have hoped for a more positive and supportive tribute to the huge improvements we have all made over the past two years than that given by Candy Morris, Chief Executive of NHS South East Coast, our Strategic Health Authority. It was in her *Start the Week*, a weekly newsletter she sends out to the South East NHS.

It was well worth a read. Here are two of the things she said about us. She noted the fact that it is now two years since the Healthcare Commission report into the two C. difficile outbreaks in 2004 and 2005 and said, "This juxtaposition in timing really brought home to me how changed MTW is in terms of its leadership, culture, confidence in itself and optimism for the future. "

And later on: "This speaks of an organisation that is achieving the kind of culture change required to deliver zero tolerance on healthcare acquired infection. Even better, MTW is setting the kind of challenges for itself that high-performing organisations do, and implementing a strong organisational development programme across the depth and breadth of the Trust."

Well, you can't say fairer than that!

Single Sex Next

The next big challenge for this Trust is to create single sex accommodation for virtually all our patients.

“We’re well on our way to getting there,” says Flo Panel Coates, Director of Nursing and responsible for driving the change across the Trust’s three hospitals. “We are now around 90% there nearly all of the time. That’s a big achievement, and everyone involved is proud of how far we have got in a relatively short time.”

Soon the Trust will be putting up posters in the wards and giving leaflets to patients explaining that, ‘Privacy and dignity is a right for *all* our patients.’

Showing the world how it’s done...

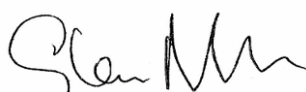
We have a regular stream of (most welcome) visitors beating a path to our door to learn from us, often but not always about how to do excellent infection control. The latest was Cathy Jamieson, Shadow Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing in the Scottish Parliament, who came on a fact-finding visit to Maidstone Hospital in October. She left saying she was taking lessons back which will be valuable to the Scottish health service.

The Shadow Health Minister wanted to learn from all the measures and zero tolerance culture for infection within our hospitals that we have put in place. The Trust has had the lowest rates of C. difficile infection in the South East for the last seven months and among the lowest in England and she wanted to know how - and why?

Cathy Jamieson said: “It was well worth getting up at 4am to travel down from Scotland. I am very impressed by all the excellent work here - there is a lot to learn from.

“I came specifically to learn from the Trust’s experience in infection control and I have, but I will also be taking back lessons about the approach to change and changing culture – initiatives like the Productive Ward which are working here are fascinating.”

After meeting with me, Flo Panel-Coates, Director of Nursing, and Dr Sara Mumford, Director of Infection Prevention and Control she was taken on a tour of the wards and isolation facilities.



Glenn Douglas
Chief Executive