

RHN NEWS

WINTER 2018



Pets as
therapy



Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability

Welcome

Contents

...to another issue of RHN News.

Although we had the hottest summer (and autumn!) in recent history, life at the hospital was as busy as ever.

In this issue we celebrate our second successful RHN Festival, our staff conference that brings together staff from across the hospital for learning and fun (page 4).

We had another successful thank you evening, our annual opportunity to thank those who raise money for us, and on page 6 we hear from one of those dedicated supporters Anna, about why she chose to raise money for the RHN.

Our staff spotlight on page 10 features our Compass team,, the people who help patients and residents use assistive technologies as communication aids, for rehab and leisure.

Happy reading!

Paul Allen
Chief Executive



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We're online! Follow us @RHNUK

The RHN is a well-respected, charity hospital and research centre, providing care for adults with brain injuries.

Founded in 1854, our Putney-based community provides specialist care, therapies and innovative technologies to meet the complex needs of people with profound disabilities.

We pride ourselves on caring for our patients as individuals, offering hope, as well as practical and emotional support to them and their families.

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please email comms@rhn.org.uk or call 020 8780 4519.

Hello Horace!

Horace is the very sweet, six year old Border Terrier who comes to the hospital once a week to spend time with some of our patients. Horace is a Pets As Therapy (PAT) dog.

Pets As Therapy is a charity started in 1983 to provide animal assisted therapy across the UK. Volunteers share their pets and their time visiting people at home, in hospitals, hospices, schools, day care centres and prisons.

Annie Hudson, Horace's owner told us why they visit the RHN every week...

"I watched a documentary about stroke patients who had access to dogs as part of their rehabilitation and really liked the idea of working with adults in a similar way. So I asked PAT for recommendations, they suggested the RHN and it sounded ideal.



Annie and Horace

Horace likes... cream crackers and rich tea biscuits!



Horace is... very affectionate, alert and high maintenance!

Horace and I visit a few wards every time we visit, but how long we stay depends on how people are feeling on the day – it's usually an hour or two.

Then we go to the common areas to see the patients/residents who are with visiting families and friends off the wards. We also walk around the hospital to see as many people as possible and always meet people who've never seen Horace before so will stop and chat.

Depending on who Horace is with and their condition, it's not always easy to gauge how patients/residents feel when we're there, but the therapists let me know how impactful the visits are. With people who can express themselves, I see the smiles and very positive reactions. Being able to stroke and play with a friendly dog is just so nice for everyone and I find it very rewarding.

Everyone here is so kind and really embrace Horace and the good that he does."

Interested in becoming an RHN volunteer?
Visit www.rhn.org.uk/support-us/volunteering
for more information.



Mike (a patient) getting to know Horace



The RHN festival

When you have four days of workshops, activities, team talks and wellbeing sessions, it can only mean one thing, another RHN Festival - our alternative version to a staff conference.

For the second year running, staff across the hospital had the opportunity to learn more about working in other departments, meet trustees and board members and have some exec-approved fun.

We had a full agenda including a performance from Putney High School's a cappella choir and a chance to sing with our own RHN choir. There was also interactive learning and development sessions, a fiercely fought quiz, a first class bake-off and a great sports day.



News



Just a few of our super supporters!

Thank you evening

We recently held our annual thank you evening to celebrate our supporters. The special people that we rely on to fundraise for us, so we can provide all the extra services that make the RHN such a great place for our patients and residents.

Our wonderful runners, riders and walkers took on various sports and challenge events and raised over £90,000!

Staff, corporate partners, friends from the community and family members of some patients/residents were recognised and a special mention was given to Anna Sachdev, whose father lives here, as she single-handedly raised £5,720 - the most amount of money (for a single challenge) this year.

It was a lovely evening that also involved a fantastic performance from Putney High schools a cappella group, Pitch Purple. Thanks again to all of our supporters and everyone who made the evening a success.



Gala dinner

This year held in the spectacular UnderGlobe at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, our annual gala dinner was another outstanding event. There were wonderful performances from the Royal Harmonics and Ember Trio, a hilarious game of heads and tails and a very speedy auction!

All money raised from the evening – just over £80,000 went to our Leisure and Families Service, who are responsible for our patients and residents social activities, entertainment and trips/outings.



Why I raise money for the RHN

As a charity hospital we rely on donations to provide additional therapies and services that benefit our patients and residents.

We are fortunate to have enthusiastic and generous supporters who dedicate their time raising money for us in various ways.

Anna Sachdev shared why she fundraised for the RHN

"Back in 1993 my Dad came down with what we thought was flu and a headache. I was six years old, my younger brother was four and our baby sister was nearly one. It was when the flu didn't go away, that he was diagnosed with TB meningitis. TB is curable, so he was given medication but unfortunately it was too late to stop the damage it had done to his brain.

While I was at school, my weekends were spent making trips back and forth to the RHN to visit my Dad. He slowly lost nearly all movement, speech and much of his cognitive ability, it was a bit like he had a severe stroke.

25 years later and to me, not much has changed as he has remained very stable. I remember when he used to put his thumb up for yes or clench his fist for no. I even have a distant memory of him writing his name in birthday cards with a little guidance, and when we had some very basic ways of communicating. This means of communication has now completely disappeared, but I still have my dad.

The RHN has become my second home. They have provided so much care for him over the last 24 years which is largely down to the fundraising that they so heavily rely on. The London Marathon is something I've always wanted to do. When I had the opportunity to do this while also raising money for the hospital, I felt like I couldn't say no!

As the end of winter came in sight and the long training runs in the snow started to reduce in mileage, the prospect of completing my first marathon started to feel more real.

As the week of the marathon approached and the weather was predicted to be warmer and warmer, my nerves turned to how I was going to complete 26.2 miles in the heat when I had only trained in the cold and snow!

By the time the day came, the nerves had gone and I was excited to just get going. The atmosphere from start to finish



Post marathon joy!

was like nothing I could have ever imagined. I had been told the atmosphere would just keep me going and it was so true.

Whenever there was a moment of doubt in my head about completing it, the crowds and other runners kept me running. I also knew I had family and friends dotted around the route as well as the RHN support team at Tower Bridge which was incredible.

The best moments were when I was surprised by spotting unexpected familiar faces, people who had also made the effort to come and cheer me on (ex-colleagues, housemates and friends) let alone the members of public who cheered me on by my name as it was printed on my top! The level of support, love and generosity all in one day was so special.

A lot of people had told me it would be one of the most amazing days of my life and it definitely was! If I could run the London marathon again tomorrow (without all the training through the cold winter) I would sign up tomorrow!"

If you'd like to raise money for our charity, please visit www.rhn.org.uk/support-us or call our events team on 020 8780 4560 to learn about all the ways you can help.



Anna with her dad



Anna at our thank you evening with our Chair Des Benjamin



Research updates

As ever, our research team have been busy sharing their vast knowledge by providing training and open lectures for peers across the UK.

Our conference on 'Challenging Behaviour Following Stroke and Acquired Brain Injury: Improved Management in Acute Residential and Community Settings was a great success. 71 delegates attended the conference, with some travelling from as far as Scotland, Yorkshire, Manchester and Devon to join us.

Building on our existing training, a new course on Swallowing and Nutrition: Navigating Risk, Complexity and Ethical Dilemmas has been launched.

Some of the recent publications from the team

Patients with a severe prolonged Disorder of Consciousness can show classical EEG responses to their own name compared with others' names.

AM Kempny, L James, K Yelden, S Duport, SF Farmer, D Playford, AP Leff

NeuroImage Clinical - April 2018

"Neither a wife nor a widow": an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experiences of female family caregivers in disorders of consciousness.

SM Soeterik, S Connolly, A Riazi

Neuropsychological Rehabilitation - December 2018

For a complete list of publications visit

<https://www.rhn.org.uk/professionals/research>

Congratulations to...

Dr Agnieszka Kempny, speciality doctor who was awarded a PhD for her thesis on 'Characterising brain function in vegetative and minimally conscious states patients'.

Monet Marinas Clinical Nurse Specialist, Infection Control nurse for her MSc in Healthcare associated infection control.

They both collected their qualifications at University College London in July.

Dealing with my brain injury

Jason How was a patient on our Drapers ward until earlier this year, he told us about his treatment and progress...

"In March last year, I suffered a traumatic brain injury after a fall. In early October I was admitted to the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability for rehabilitation, where I stayed for four months.

My time in the hospital was difficult, overwhelming and life-changing. For me, being admitted to the Drapers ward was a big turning point in my recovery. During my time at the hospital I was able to achieve my goals. I was able to walk again and improved my balance by going to gym sessions with physiotherapists. I was able to learn how to use a computer and send emails.

My favourite experience was going to town with occupational therapist Lisa, to get a haircut and new clothes. I really enjoyed that experience because I was able to see how I would cope in everyday life, the difficulties I would be facing, and learn strategies to help me overcome those.

Being in the hospital for four months was tricky. I had several obstacles to overcome. For example, I often felt too anxious to go to my sessions – though members of staff would encourage me to participate. Dealing with my brain injury has been tough. Sometimes I would forget where I have put my stuff or important details. However, I was advised to keep a diary and a notebook where I would write down



important information, create to do lists and note down what I have done in a day. This is a useful way to help support my memory and help me remember information.

I wanted to write this article to share my experience and my recovery, but also to thank everyone at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability for helping and supporting me. The staff members and my family who supported me during my time at Drapers have all helped me find reasons to keep fighting.

Although it was an overwhelming and challenging experience, it was definitely the right thing for me as it has helped me learn how to deal with my brain injury and helped me recover.

If you'd like to learn more about rehabilitation at the RHN visit www.rhn.org.uk/what-makes-us-special/rehabilitation/

We are currently fundraising to renovate Drapers ward, where Jason stayed, as part of our extensive capital works programme.

We're planning to reconfigure the ward to improve accessibility and privacy for patients, and create a spacious and homely environment that will give them the room they need to practice the skills developed through rehabilitation and nurture their independence.



If you'd like to learn more about the project or donate to it - visit www.rhn.org.uk/support-us/donate-therapy-hub/ and watch the short video about the difference it will make to our patients.

Staff spotlight



L-R: Jane, Gerard, Dante, Barnaby, Helen P, Richard and Rebekah

Compass is our assistive and rehabilitation technology service based at the hospital.

Who is in the Compass team?

There are eight of us, and we are a very multi-disciplinary team: Jane, a Clinical Technologist, is our Clinical Lead, Helen P, Helen T, and Richard are our three Speech Therapists. Richard is currently seconded on a voice-banking project with the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

We also have great technical support from three Tech Support Workers - Dante, Rebekah and Barnaby and another Clinical Technologist, Gerard, who is our engineering support.

What do you do, day to day?

Well, we start pretty early - there are usually a few of us here from 7am. Our primary goal is enabling people with communication and physical disabilities to use technology for communication, rehabilitation and leisure. That can involve anything from developing personalised pages for a communication aid, creating a bespoke switch a patient can press with their head, to fixing a mounting bracket on a wheelchair so they can travel with their device.

We fix technical issues or update software to keep all the equipment running smoothly, and also do much of our work in the computer room, supporting therapists to help patients achieve their goals. You will also see us on the wards, helping set up and maintain equipment to enable our patients to be independent in communicating and controlling their environment.

What equipment does the team use?

We use everything from laminated paper communication charts with pictures and letters and basic one word voice recorded buttons, through to complex computers and tablets mounted to wheelchairs with specially created switches, which can pick up a tiny movement of a person's body. In

the computer room we also have access to loads of software and hardware that can help our patients use technology for their rehabilitation and just for fun!

How does your work directly help patients and residents?

Our work can be crucial when a person is in hospital with no means of communicating with their family or care staff – we can provide them with a voice to speak and access to email and social networking so that they can regain some control.

Sometimes patients have been in another setting or hospital for many months before they come to the RHN and receiving their communication aid from Compass is the first time they have been able to express themselves properly in all that time. In the computer room we can help with leisure and rehabilitation goals for their overall improvement and recovery.

Do you only work at the hospital?

As well as our work within the hospital, we also help people in the community with their communication needs because we are a regional NHS Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Hub for West London funded by NHS England. We cover 11 boroughs from Brent to Croydon. We visit young people (16+) in schools and colleges, people in their own homes, day centres, nursing homes and rehab units - we go everywhere!

The AAC Compass service at the RHN is funded by donations from generous supporters. Without them we wouldn't be able to make such a positive difference to the lives of our patients and residents. If you would like to support our work or any of our specific appeals, please visit www.rhn.org.uk/support-us for details.

What's on

28 November

Christmas Fair

11am – 4pm

Forget the high street crowds and join us for our annual relaxed Christmas shopping experience.

Free entry and parking onsite.

2 December

London Santa Run

Victoria Park

Join thousands of other Santas for this great charity run, in aid of our patients and families. £25 registration fee.

6 December

Christmas Carol Concert

6.30 – 9pm

Holy Trinity Church, Beaumont Road, London, SW19 6SP.

Come along to our annual carol concert at the beautiful Holy Trinity. Expect carols, choir performances, readings and a very special performance from Miss Gwen Dickey, lead singer of Rose Royce!

Tickets are available online at www.rhn.org.uk/events.

To get in touch with the team, email events@rhn.org.uk or call 020 8780 4565.

Open lecture

12 February

Ward leadership: what would Florence Nightingale say now?

4.30 – 5.30pm

Specialist courses

31 January

The management of complex tracheostomy in long term brain injury

8.45am – 4.30pm

14 February

A multi-disciplinary approach to the assessment and management of Huntington's Disease

9am – 4.30pm

To book a course or open lecture, call 020 8780 4500 ext 5140 or email institute@rhn.org.uk. All courses and lectures are held at the RHN unless stated otherwise. Go to www.rhn.org.uk/events for further information.



Rehabilitation and long term care
for people with complex disabilities
caused by brain injury.



Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability

A national medical charity

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