Waging war on clotting – CUH consultant nurse visits home of Warfarin

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A senior nurse from Cambridge University Hospitals has visited the United States for the 60th Annual Congress of the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis, to learn about the latest treatments.

Consultant nurse Caroline Baglin is in the business of saving lives by ensuring patients at risk of, or who have experienced an episode related to blood clotting, receive the best and most up to date treatment.

Caroline, who is based in the Trust’s Haemophilia and Thrombophilia Centre, has chaired working groups aimed at improving services for those affected by dangerous and often deadly clotting disorders, and is currently working on anticoagulation treatments in patients with cancer.

This year’s conference took place in Wisconsin, the birthplace of Warfarin – one of the most widely administered drugs in the treatment of thrombophilia (blood clotting conditions). Warfarin works by slowing down the production of vitamin K, which is needed for blood to clot. It is given to help treat conditions caused by blood clots, including deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism (a clot in the lungs).
Speaking about her visit, Caroline said, “The meeting offered all professionals regardless of position the opportunity participate in discussions, learn from the best, provide guidance on emerging clinical matters and have access to the latest clinical resources available.

“I have returned to implement some of the finds as the most recent research papers were shared, and as one of my roles is to translate those findings into clinical care for my patients.”

The history of Warfarin began in the 1920s, when a series of wet summers in North America spoiled crops used to feed cattle causing an epidemic of ‘bleeding disease’. In 1933, a farmer who had lost livestock as a result of bleeding disease, turned up at the local School of Agriculture looking for answers. He brought with him a jug of blood which would not clot.

No cause was found until 1941, when biochemist Karl Paul Link traced the bleeding disease to improperly cured hay, which, aggravated by a series of wet summers, grew moulds. Link was able to isolate the anticoagulation factor within, and thus discover Warfarin.

For more information, see the links below.