
Official Opening of CUH Cancer Assessment Unit

13 March 2014

The unit, which offers specialist care to acute cancer patients, has been running successfully for six months. The centre has six assessment spaces, and is open from 8am to 9pm, Monday to Friday.

Previously, cancer patients who are acutely unwell would come to the hospital via a variety of routes which could sometimes slow down the process of receiving treatment. They may have been sent by GPs to the Accident and Emergency Department, attended Outpatients or self referred to their specialist nurse or teams. By providing one, dedicated centre to deal exclusively with acute oncology, the process is streamlined and more patients can receive the treatment they need more quickly.

Acute Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Lisa Putt said “We do as much as we can to allow the patient to maintain as normal a life as possible while receiving treatment. They can come to us directly for unplanned treatment if they become unwell due to their cancer or side effects of their treatment. They can receive treatment in the Cancer Assessment Unit and go home the same day if well enough. . We also have a dedicated telephone advice service, patients can ring the department on one number for urgent advice and we also phone patients at home to give them advice and support. The feedback so far tells us that patients really like having this personal assurance.”

Consultant Oncologist, David Gilligan said “The Cancer Assessment Unit has allowed us to streamline the service we offer, which has taken the pressure off A&E and other departments. It also means some patients can go home rather than being admitted for a long stay in the ward. This is better for the hospital and better for patients.”

Veronica Wheeler from Monkstreet near Thacksted was diagnosed with cancer in January and has been having regular treatment at the unit since then. She said “To be told you’ve got cancer is hard but getting treatment at a place like this makes it bearable. The people are always so friendly and efficient and above all very calm. I feel I know them and they know me which is very reassuring. The unit is an absolute credit to the hospital. I can’t speak more highly of the staff, they’re brilliant.” Veronica’s husband Jeremy agreed “The phone service here is also great. I’ve called them several times and it’s reassuring to know there are people

to advise you on the end of the line at any time.”

The unit will be officially opened by CUH Chief Executive Dr Keith McNeil and Chair, Jane Ramsey, at a special ceremony.

Dr Mc Neil said “The success of this unit is a real testament to the dedication and professionalism of our staff. We are lucky to have such a talented team who are able to make patients feel safe and comfortable while giving them the treatment they need as quickly and effectively as possible.”

Chair of the Trust Jane Ramsey said “This is another example of how the Trust is continuously improving its working practices to offer an even better service to patients. I’m delighted that the Cancer Assessment Unit has been so successful in its first six months and am looking forward to seeing how it develops in the future.”