

October 21<sup>st</sup> 2011

## Press Release

### 'MIN' MARKS LUPUS AWARENESS MONTH

Staff at Bath's Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases (RNHRD) NHS Foundation Trust, locally known as 'the Min' are joining forces with the Western Lupus Group to mark Lupus Awareness Month which is running nationally throughout October 2011.

Lupus is a connective tissue disease affecting around 50,000 in the UK. It is an autoimmune illness whereby the patient's immune system creates a surplus of antibodies, which attack the tissues rather than protect the body against viruses and bacteria. The vast majority of lupus patients suffer extreme tiredness and disabling muscle and joint pain.

The hospital offers a specialist service to treat connective tissue diseases (CTDs) including lupus and receives local, national and international referrals. The service is evidence based and staff at 'the Min' are involved in a number of ongoing research projects into lupus including:

- a lupus genetics study looking at identifying genes that may be associated with the development of lupus and ethnic risk. This research, supported by the National Co-ordinating Centre of Research Capacity Development, is being carried out collaboratively with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine;
- working with Manchester University comparing response to treatments for lupus;
- working alongside Birmingham University Hospital in looking at an assessment tool to measure disease activity.

A DVD to assist patients when they are first diagnosed has been released this month to coincide with Lupus Awareness Month and will feature on a Western Lupus Group information stand in the hospital during October. The DVD and an accompanying booklet are based on results from 'the Min's' own research project into information needed by patients when they are first diagnosed. This project was run from 'the Min' by Nicola Waldron and Sue Brown and involved lupus nurses from Bangor, Exeter, Southampton, London, Manchester and Bristol. The DVD features Sue Brown, who is one of only a few nurses in the UK who specialise in CTDs and is chair of the Lupus UK Nurses Network group

Sue Brown said: "Lupus Awareness Month provides an important opportunity to raise understanding of the condition. Patient treatment and support is a high priority for us, alongside our involvement in national research projects. With the DVD, we now have a wonderful resource that will be available to those newly diagnosed with lupus and I am delighted that we could lead this project so that patients can benefit in the future."

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**Notes for Editors:**

- The hospital works closely with the Western Lupus Group which holds regular patient meetings at the hospital throughout the year. During Lupus Awareness Month, the group has been running an information stand in the hospital foyer on three mornings – Thursday October 6<sup>th</sup>, Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> and Thursday October 27<sup>th</sup>. <http://westernlupus.org.uk/>
- For further information see <http://www.lupusuk.org.uk/>
- The RNHRD NHS FT is a national specialist rehabilitation and rheumatology hospital based in Bath. Offering services to adults, children and young people the Trust has expertise in general and complex:
  - Rheumatological and musculoskeletal conditions
  - Neurological rehabilitation
  - Chronic pain management
  - Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME
  - [www.rnhrd.nhs.uk](http://www.rnhrd.nhs.uk)