St Gemma’s Hospice – University of Leeds press release

July 2017

New agreement creates first formal university teaching hospice in UK

St Gemma’s Hospice in Leeds is to become the first formally recognised university teaching hospice in the UK, helping it to provide the best possible palliative care by using the latest research to inform staff and student training.

The hospice, the largest in Yorkshire, will mark its new status at a launch event this September, following the pioneering agreement with the University of Leeds.

It has been supported by NHS Health Education England and reflects the long-standing relationship between St Gemma’s and the University of Leeds, providing a stronger platform for teaching and research in the future.

The new permanent extended relationship provides increased capacity for Leeds students to study palliative care in practice at St Gemma’s as part of their degrees.

Raising the profile of palliative care research nationally and internationally, and ensuring the sector has a continued flow of expert medical and managerial personnel is a key feature of the new relationship.

Outstanding care

Kerry Jackson, Chief Executive of St Gemma’s said: “Patients and families already receive outstanding care, as judged by the Care Quality Commission. The new relationship we have created with the University of Leeds, means we can take that further, and embed research-based training and teaching into all our operations.”

Dr Peter Bellfield, Chair of Trustees at the Hospice, added: “We’re delighted to have formed this partnership with the University of Leeds which will improve even further the standard of compassion and care we can give to our patients. It has been built on years of positive experience of working with the University and will also benefit students in the future.”

Ongoing research

The hospice and the university joined forces in 2011 to appoint Professor Mike Bennett as the St Gemma’s professor of palliative medicine. Professor Bennett leads the Academic Unit of Palliative Care based at the University’s Leeds Institute of Health Sciences and at St Gemma’s Hospice.

The hospice has provided university teaching and training in the form of a postgraduate healthcare course for more than 20 years and works with around 200 medical students per year to develop their skills in this area.

Professor Bennett said: “The work we have carried out together has ensured St Gemma’s staff and volunteers have had the most up-to-date education in standards of care, based on evidence from ongoing research programmes.

“Formalising this partnership between two of the city’s most respected organisations means patients for years to come will continue to be well supported. It also provides an opportunity to raise the profile of teaching and research in palliative care nationally.

“Ultimately it means the people we look after will be treated in the best way possible and, as patients’ needs change over time, we will always be in a position to adapt because of the new research which will be carried out.”
In its most recent assessment, the Care Quality Commission specifically highlighted the hospice’s academic unit, led by Professor Bennett, as a factor in improving patient care which contributed to the overall ‘outstanding’ rating.

As a result of the partnership, further undergraduate and master’s level teaching will be carried out, and significant palliative care research projects led by Professor Bennett will be planned. These will expand on previous research work.

Both organisations see the arrangement as a trajectory for ever-further improvement, to support the sector and the patients at St Gemma’s, by embedding best practice.

Working with the team and patients will also give more people within the university medical research community unique insight into how a leading hospice operates, helping improve the organisation of research projects.

Notes to editors:

Kerry Jackson is available for interview, contact Nicola Woodgate at St Gemma’s Hospice on 0113 218 5557 or email NicolaW@st-gemma.co.uk

Michael Bennett is also available for interview, contact Peter Le Riche at the University of Leeds on 0113 343 2049 or email p.leriche@leeds.ac.uk

While other hospices carry out some levels of training or have been involved in individual research projects, this is the first time a permanent partnership has been created. The hospice and university have consulted with the UK Medical Schools Council, which is the official body for approving university hospitals, which has said it was ‘pleased hospices are beginning to engage in this way’. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Education have also provided approval as part of the process. In addition, the proposal has also been supported by NHS Health Education England’s Yorkshire and the Humber division.

The relationship between the University and the hospice is not financially based, and will not affect the hospice’s need to raise funds from generous public donations to support its ongoing work.

Examples of research carried out at St Gemma’s Hospice:

Resources: Tackling Cancer Pain resource highly commended in BMA awards.

- News story
- Academic paper

The improving management of pain from advanced cancer in the community programme is being delivered by clinical nurse specialists from hospices.

Research paper: Terminal cancer patients not receiving adequate pain relief.

- News story
- Academic paper

Book: Practical Management of Complex Cancer Pain, of which Professor Bennett was one of four authors, was awarded the British Medical Association’s 2015 Book of the Year award.

Cancer Pain Standards: The Academic Unit at St Gemma’s headed by Professor Bennett led the creation of Core Standards for Cancer Pain treatment within a wider working group at the Royal College of Anaesthetists in 2015. These have been adopted as NHS service standards for pain, which in turn form part of the 2016 Care Quality Commission inspection framework for end of life care in the UK.