

# The Clinical and Academic Department of Cardiovascular Medicine at the Whittington takes customer service to new levels of excellence

The Clinical and Academic Department of Cardiovascular Medicine at the Whittington Hospital NHS Trust delivers specialist care for complaints and illnesses regarding the heart. It also teaches at undergraduate, postgraduate and undergraduate nursing levels. In July 2009 it achieved customer service excellence – CSE – when assessed by the inspection body SGS United Kingdom Limited. The CSE standard is a government tool to help organisations put their customers at the centre of their work.

The department has a long tradition of developing high quality customer service. On behalf of the Trust, the department delivers specialist

care to inpatients (through the Montuschi Ward, outpatient clinics, the cardiovascular investigation unit, outreach work in rehabilitation and heart failure, and in the anticoagulant and stroke prevention clinics). It also provides treatment across five primary care trusts in GP surgeries, community pharmacies and community hospitals.

“Our goal was simple. We wanted to improve our services and encourage staff to think more broadly about customer service. We recognise that this process helps the culture of being open to ideas, which can improve the way we deliver our services. It also enables us to be more accepting of any

critical comments, which can motivate us to improve in areas where we fail to deliver as high a quality services as we aspire to,” says Professor Patterson.

The SGS assessor reported that the department showed “a deep understanding and a commitment to customer service excellence. The commitment was found from senior management levels through to operational and front line staff.”

“The Whittington Hospital NHS Trust has now adopted an explicitly customer focused approach to the development of its services at a corporate level,” says SGS assessor, Tom Banks. “This is largely a reflection of the work over the

past 12 years of the Clinical and Academic Department of Cardiovascular Medicine. The corporate and departmental approaches now demonstrate an excellent level of synergy in their mutually responsive strategies to the development of customer responsive service.”

“There are many areas of good practice,” adds Tom Banks. “The anticoagulant and stroke prevention community based clinic service, in particular, is an excellent example of best practice.” As a result, he is recommending notifying the service to the cabinet office for consideration as an example of Transformational Practice.

## The Whittington – hospital of choice for global people

Friday 25 September 2009 saw the Whittington Hospital become the first medical site in the world to provide the new FerriScan Rapide – a 10 minute Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan which accurately measures liver iron concentration.

The measuring of liver iron concentration is vital to detect patients who are at risk from ‘iron overload’, a disease that can be fatal if not treated. Iron overload is common in patients who have multiple blood transfusions, as each blood transfusion has high iron content. Patients with conditions such as thalassaemia, sickle cell anaemia and myelodysplastic syndrome are often at risk.

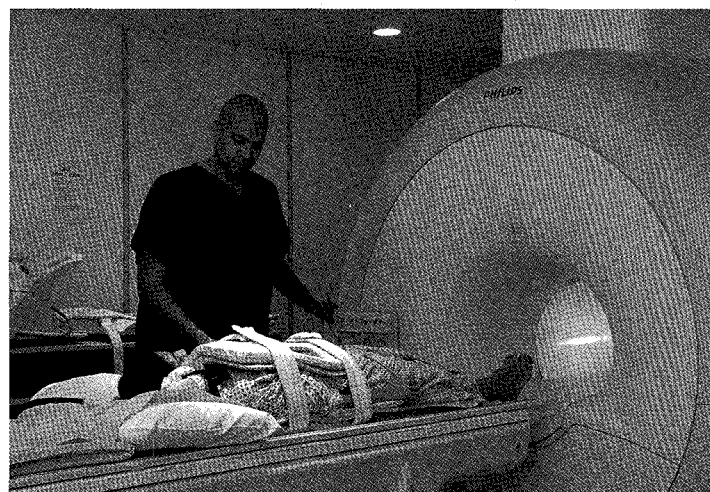
In addition, iron overload can be caused by a common genetic condition called hereditary haemochromatosis, which affects around one in 220

people in the UK. This condition can cause abnormally high iron absorption from a person’s diet.

Iron overload has previously been difficult to detect and liver iron concentration had to be measured by liver biopsy, an invasive and expensive procedure. Now the FerriScan Rapide enables patients to undergo a quick, painless 10 minute scan which provides a colour coded map of their liver to give an accurate and specific reading of iron concentration.

At the launch Dr Caroline Allum, consultant radiologist and clinical lead for the imaging department, gave a speech to explain the significance of this equipment to patients and the hospital itself:

“I would like to say that this exciting new development has been part of a concerted team effort and I extend thanks to Melanie Baxter and Resonance Health, to our MRI team, and to



the haematology and radiology consultants who have made this happen.

“The Whittington prides itself on being the hospital of choice for local people and this is a prime example of the Trust focusing on the needs of our local population. In this instance, however, this technological first will not only benefit those who live locally but those who live further away.

We are proud that we are first in the world to deliver this service – and in this instance we are the hospital of choice, or the

service of choice, for global people” she said.

The FerriScan Rapide launch was attended by representatives from the Sickle Cell Society, Thalassaemia Society, Haemochromatosis Society and consultants at the hospital. Patient representatives who will benefit from the new FerriScan were also present at the event with the first UK Thalassaemia patient having her FerriScan Rapide scan results delivered on the same morning.