



Medical

Specialist nurses explain their roles

As many parents know, each supra-regional liver unit has a team of specialist nurses whose role is fundamental to the caring for a child with liver disease. In the first of two articles, Birmingham and Leeds outline their roles and responsibilities with King's College Hospital's team featuring in the next edition of Delivery.

Birmingham Children's Team



The Birmingham Team

At Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BCH), the Liver Unit Specialist Nurse Team plays a vital role in the coordination of care for children with liver conditions and before and after transplantation. Our main roles are in:

- Meeting the information needs of children of all ages and their families.
- Working with ward-based staff to ensure that families have the necessary skills to look after their child safely in the home. This may include medication, enteral feeding, stoma care and problem-solving skills.
- Ensuring that children have a written vaccination plan so that children benefit from timely and efficient vaccination.
- Running telephone support services. We are very proud of our service which we have called Liver Direct. At the moment this is manned for 2 hours a day and has e-mail and voicemail support.
- Coordination of immunosuppression for the 400 patients who are on some form of medication that affects their immune system. This involves collecting blood result and medication levels and

communicating the new plan either by phone and letter where there is a medication change or by letter when no change is made.

- Building and strengthening networks of care and support within the child's primary health care and shared care teams so that care and support is continued locally.
- Supporting the education of health workers both in the Liver Unit, BCH and local universities.
- Supporting the research and audit programme of the Liver Unit. We have been led in this by our Viral Hepatitis Team who are acknowledged experts in setting up research with children and in the writing of research leaflets for children.

I have worked within this team now for 16 years and still enjoy the challenges that an ever changing NHS brings to us as Specialist Hepatology and Transplant Unit and to the dedicated team that I lead and contribute to.

Graham Gordon
Principal Specialist Nurse (Hepatology and Transplantation)
Liver Unit Specialist Nurse Team Leader

St James's University Hospital Team

The Hepatology Nurse Liaison Team at St James's Hospital in Leeds includes Sister Lynne Henderson and Sister Safiya Mulla. The service is both a regional and Supra-regional service covering the north of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

The team provides expert nursing care, education, advice and support

for families suffering from acute and chronic hepatobiliary disorders, both in the clinic and the ward setting. This involves co-ordinating the patient's pathway from diagnosis to discharge and liaising with members of the multi-disciplinary team in the acute hospital setting and also in the community.

The parents of Rachael Crierie, a child with liver disease, said: "The service has been invaluable and the liaison role is important for the family because it helps to bridge the gap between consultant and patient. Without Lynne and Safiya we would not have got through those early stages. They never judged us, gave us reassurance when we needed it and provided sound advice. They have been a Godsend; you could say they are our guardian angels."

The team is currently in the process of setting up a transition programme for adolescents with the aim of ensuring a smooth transition from the paediatric service to the adult service. This includes a nurse led clinic where patients are reviewed by the Liaison Sister separate to the Consultant. This allows for more detailed discussion with adolescents who find it easier to talk about lifestyle issues in a more informal setting. Already the team has had feedback to suggest that the outpatient experience has improved.



Lynne and Safiya