



CHIEF EXECUTIVE CONNECTS

Dear Colleague,

06/01/2022

As we bring in a new year none of us would have thought that we would have once again been living with restrictions.

In line with the picture we are seeing nationally, the figures for the Omicron variant have risen sharply, with a 41 per cent increase across our Health Board area alone. Case numbers have recently been driven predominantly by younger age groups but we are starting to see this increase across all age ranges including the over 60s.

Like others we have not seen a significant rise in the people who have been vaccinated getting seriously ill but we still have some very sick people in our ITU and our recovery wards.

New hospital admissions with COVID-19 are rising. We currently have 122 positive COVID-19 patients receiving care across our hospital sites which is putting added pressure on the system.

But the lasting impact of COVID-19 in whichever the variant, is still being realised.

Traditionally the first few weeks of January are when winter pressures are at their peak. At this time of year we see a combination of factors emerging. The temperature drops, the weather worsens, flu and respiratory viruses start to take a hold and the communicable

diseases within the community start to spread as more return to work and school. We meticulously plan for this in the NHS including tracking virus epidemiology from the Australasian continent.

However, this year, our plans now include another mutation of COVID-19 and the impact of the virus on our patients and community as well as our staffing.

Like all other NHS organisations, we are seeing a significant impact of the virus on our staff whether that is staff sickness or staff needing to isolate due to COVID-19. We are having to restrict some services again to enable those staff to be re-deployed to other areas and for them to fill the gaps in our essential emergency clinical services.

Reluctantly we are having to review the planned surgery of many people in order to be able to handle the current bed capacity across our system, which is being felt from primary care to our acute hospital sites.

I am truly sorry that if you are waiting for a much-needed surgery and it is impacting upon your quality of how you live your life, or you are in discomfort and pain, I appreciate and understand the distress this will cause you and your family.

Please be assured that all of us are working around the clock to maintain as many essential services as possible but with the increase in Omicron-related cases, our staffing situation has deteriorated significantly.

As a Health Board we have enacted our twice weekly operational system wide briefings. Staff can follow these 24/7 on our staff app - Staff Connect.

Never before has the time to use NHS services sparingly and in the right conditions been more apt.

On a positive note, last week we reached over 1 million people being vaccinated across our Health Board. This is extraordinary number in the timescales. I would like to thank all of staff and partners who have helped us keep all of our services open throughout the festive and new year period and all of the volunteers and partners who have stood by our side and rolled up their sleeves with us.

I would like to say a farewell to Steve Curry who worked with us as Chief Operating Officer since November 2017, having undertaken the role on an interim basis one year prior. On behalf of my colleagues, I want to wish Steve all the best for the future and thank you for his service.

A big welcome to Caroline Bird who will be stepping into the role as interim Executive Chief Operating Officer and Abigail Harris as interim Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

As we bring in a new year, I am personally starting feeling the pressure over the coming weeks and the enormity of the size and scale of the challenge. But I also remain hopeful

– the vaccination has given us back some confidence and optimism. That as the nights will start to draw out and not in, things will slowly start to get back to a life as we want to live it.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy New Year, and a huge thank you to our staff, patients, volunteers, our partners, our community and the thousands of people every day who contribute to the fight against COVID-19.

Sad farewell to Brian Rees

On behalf of Cardiff and Vale, Professor Merial Jenney and I send our thoughts and wishes to the family of Mr Brian Rees, a good friend and exceptional colleague who sadly passed away on 29 December 2021.

Brian touched many lives and was well-liked and highly influential in the world of medicine. He started at the University Hospital of Wales as a general surgeon in 1992 before becoming the lead cancer clinician in 2000. Brian was awarded an OBE for his services to medicine in the same year and in 2008 he also became High Sheriff of South Glamorgan.

Brian was also recognised for reaching the highest level in professional rugby, earning three caps for Wales in 1967.

Brian was a high achiever, a great leader and set the very highest standards across everything he did throughout his career. Personally, I will always remember being lucky enough to be his medical student in general surgery. A charismatic and highly professional tutor, Brian was one of the most well-respected medics that I, and no doubt many

of my colleagues across the health board, will have ever known.

He will be remembered for his stellar career as an eminent surgeon, a skilled rugby player and for his presence, charm, wit and sense of fun. A memorial is planned later in the year, with details to be confirmed.

[Wales Online has published a touching tribute to Brian's life which you can read here.](#)



Vaccination Update

Over the Christmas break our vaccination team achieved the amazing milestone of delivering 1 million vaccinations to our population. This is an incredible number and has been delivered in just over a year from when the Mass Vaccination programme began. The planning, resource and time that has gone into this programme is phenomenal. Thank you to all of our staff and volunteers for supporting this work and thank you to every member of the public who has attended to receive their

vaccine and keep our population safe.

We are sadly not out of the woods yet in terms of Covid with cases of Omicron still increasing in the community. However, the vaccine is still our best defence against serious illness so we urge you to please still attend when you are invited.

We will be holding limited walk ins for booster vaccinations this week at Bayside and Holm View Mass Vaccination Centres. If you are over 18 you are welcome to attend for your booster between 8.30am and 7.30pm at Holm View from 6 to 9 January and at Bayside on 6 and 7 January.

Please note both centres are still operating walk-in appointments for first and second doses if you are aged 16 and over, seven days per week.

District Nursing message to the public

Due to the pressures across the whole system our community nursing teams are facing an increased demand which means they need to reprioritise the care provided.

We want to reassure the public the team will continue to provide high quality safe care 24/7 to the population but it may need to be delivered in a slightly different way in response to the current pressures.

The District Nursing service is still available 24/7 and we will continue to provide a core service to include palliative care, hospital admission avoidance and urgent assessment to continue to support people when they are discharged from hospital. However, some routine care may need to be revised slightly

such as simple dressing changes and bloods to enable the team to prioritise care for those that need it more urgently.

The service is continuing to see an increase in the number of people discharged from hospital, the numbers of housebound patients and we continue to provide support to our nursing care home sector, who are also facing staffing challenges. This coupled with self-isolation and awaiting test results is providing an additional staffing pressure across the service. [To read more, visit the website here.](#)

Caesarean Section Pathways Transformed to Improve Patient Experience and Care

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (UHB) Midwifery, Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department is pleased to bring to fruition increased capacity for elective caesarean sections at University Hospital of Wales (UHW).

The unit at UHW is the largest in Wales and our staff care for patients with some of the most complex maternal health needs regionally. The new elective caesarean section list capacity will allow patients to be divided into two streams, one for emergency care and one for planned care.

The new system has been developed in collaboration with staff, as well as using valuable patient feedback. It has been endorsed by a number of professional organisations including Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Royal College of Anaesthetists that this is a preferred model of care. Other NHS organisations have also successfully implemented similar

models which have significantly improved the experience of patients.

As part of the previous model, planned care could often be disrupted by emergency care which needed to take priority. The new system will alleviate these pressures and delays. [Read more here.](#)



Car parking update

In December we reintroduced car parking restrictions at our hospital sites. These restrictions are helping us to improve patient access to car parking as well as improve safety and ease congestion on site.

Patients and visitors should park in designated car parks, and staff can park in any staff car park allocated on their permit. [Please visit our website to view parking site maps for UHW and UHL here.](#)

While car parking remains free for all users, we do ask that you park responsibly on site to keep our hospitals safe. Parking on double yellow lines, in hatched areas, in a disabled bay or if your vehicle is blocking access will incur a fine.

We also have a free Park and Ride service for patients, staff and visitors traveling to UHW

and UHL. Using this service helps reduce the number of vehicles coming onto our hospital sites and frees up car parking for those who most need it. [For more information about timetables, visit our website.](#)

MBE awarded to Dr Bala

Congratulations to Dr Subramaniam Balachandran (known as Dr. Bala), for his recognition in the Queen's New Year Honours as he receives an MBE: For services to the NHS in COVID-19.

Dr Bala was appointed as a Consultant Anaesthetist at Cardiff and Vale UHB in May 2002 and has been a lead for Infection Control for more than 12 years.

As a routine program, Dr Bala started mask fitting sessions in October 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic began, so the perioperative directorate within Surgery Clinical Board was well prepared.



He also developed PPE guidance after reviewing the contemporary evidence which required constant updating due to the dynamic nature of the COVID-19 situation.

His work on providing appropriate PPE for healthcare workers, especially for the aerosol generating procedures, and PPE guidance has immensely helped in preventing cross infection between patients, health care workers and their colleagues. Consequently, the work has ensured healthcare workers feel safe in their working environment which helped to maintain the workforce within Cardiff and Vale UHB.

During the peak pandemic period Dr Bala and his team carried out over 3200 mask fit testings on various FFP3 masks and reusable respirators to protect the staff at the UHB. In addition to UHB staff Dr Bala also helped dental staff in and around Cardiff.

Dr Bala has instituted various infection control measures including relevant audit projects and was actively involved during Swine flu pandemic in 2009-10 which involved the development of the directorate strategic plan and conducting FFP3 mask fitting sessions for staff.

Since then Dr Bala has been doing regular FFP3 mask fitting sessions, so that healthcare workers have appropriate PPE and has also been involved in training of the testers.

Stuart Walker, Interim Chief Executive at Cardiff and Vale UHB said: "I am incredibly proud of the work Dr Bala has done and this well-deserved recognition is a testament to his commitment to infection prevention and control."

“The safety of our workforce is always important but has never been more so than during the COVID-19 pandemic, so the key work he and his team carried out to ensure staff were safe and to minimise cross infection at a time where guidance was changing quickly is admirable. On behalf of the Board and Dr Bala’s colleagues I would like to extend our congratulations.”

Staff Recognition Awards

Nominations for our annual Staff Recognition Awards 2022 are now open. This is a chance to recognise a member of health board staff or a volunteer who you believe has demonstrated excellent practice and dedication in caring for people and keeping them well.

This year’s categories include:

- Amplifying our Strategy into Action
- Best Environmental Sustainability Project
- Chair & Chief Executive Award
- Chair’s Commendation
- Compassionate Leadership Award
- Contribution to Education and Teaching
- Exceptional contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Health and Wellbeing at Work
- Health Charity Star of the Year
- Innovation, Improvement and Transformation at its best

- Leading in equality, diversity and inclusion
- Living Our Values Award
- Meeting our requirements for the Welsh Language Standards
- Outstanding Contribution to Safety
- Patient Engagement and Experience
- People’s Choice Award
- Research & Development
- Volunteer of the Year

Nominations are open until Friday 21 January with the awards ceremony being held on Friday 8 April. We are keeping our fingers crossed that we will be able to hold this year’s event in person. More details to follow. For more information and to submit a nomination form visit <https://cavuhb.nhs.wales/staff-information/your-development/staff-recognition-awards-2022/>



A Man And His Dog

A big thank you to Richard and his beloved dog Penny for raising an amazing £1860 for Cardiff & Vale Health Charity, pictured here with Helen Bennet of the T4 Neurosciences High Care Unit.

Richard has been tirelessly fundraising for the Unit after he was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 2014. Read his story here [Congratulations to Richard for completing the 25K Trekfest challenge in the Brecon Beacons | Cardiff & Vale Health Charity.](#)



Rubicon Session at Hafan y Coed

As part of the Arts and Minds initiative, Rubicon will be working with our Neuropsychiatry Department at Hafan y Coed, the Mental Health Unit, providing music and movement sessions to aid recovery. This is made possible thanks to funding from Arts Council of Wales and The Baring Foundation.

[Read more here.](#)