

E&NH0637

## Award-winning service helps keep rheumatoid arthritis patients well



*Rheumatology nurse practitioner, Fidelma Gordon with a patient at the Lister hospital*

**Stevenage, UK – 26 March 2018** – Responding to rising demand on the Trust's rheumatology outpatient services, an award-winning annual review service supports patients with stable inflammatory arthritis. The aim of this nurse-led service has been to ensure that patients are reviewed regularly, with risk assessments for cardiovascular disease and bone health (which can be compromised by [rheumatoid arthritis](#)) also undertaken.

## **2/Award-winning service helps keep rheumatoid arthritis patients well**

The Trust's rheumatology nurse practitioner, Fidelma Gordon, commented:

“As well as freeing up time for our consultants to review more complex patients, our nurse-led annual review clinics have helped improve the quality of care provided to our patients through these regular follow-up reviews. The patients involved have more time to discuss their general health needs, which can include the early detection of complications such as osteoporosis and reductions in people's medication where that is warranted. The success of these annual review clinics has seen them become a cornerstone of the Trust's outpatient service for patients with rheumatoid arthritis.”

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### **About the Trust's rheumatoid arthritis service**

The annual review service, which won a clinical prize from the [British Health Professionals in Rheumatology](#) in 2015, supports detailed assessment for patients with rheumatoid arthritis that can lead to treatments being reduced for those in remission, as well as escalation for those with active disease. Having the time to reflect on psychosocial issues, and potential complications of someone having the condition can also lead to important benefits – particularly detecting osteoporosis.

[Rheumatoid arthritis](#) is a long-term condition that causes pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints that is thought to affect approximately 1% of adults in the UK, usually affecting the hands, feet and wrists. It is an autoimmune disease, which means that people's immune systems – which fight infection normally – attack the cells that line joints by mistake, making them swollen, stiff and painful. Over time, the condition can damage the joint itself, cartilage and nearby bone. There may be periods where symptoms become worse – known as flare-ups or flares – that can require people to be admitted to hospital.

The annual review clinics form part of a wider service from the Trust's rheumatology team, which also includes early arthritis and – from January 2018 – flare clinics that result in patients with rheumatoid arthritis having access to one of the best performing services in the country that increasingly is gaining national recognition for the high quality care the team provides.

Further information and advice about rheumatoid arthritis is provided by [Arthritis Research UK](#).

### **The East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust**

The Trust provides a wide range of acute and tertiary care services from four hospitals, namely the: Lister in Stevenage; New QEII in Welwyn Garden City; Hertford County in Hertford; and the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre in Northwood, Middlesex

For more information about the Trust, go to the [website](#).

**For more information, please call the communications team on: 01438 285362 or 01438 285940; for out-of-hours calls, please page the duty press officer on 07659 103839.**

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