Representing staff members

Three staff governors have completed their first year in post. Barry McCarthy finds out about their experiences and the challenges they’ve faced.

“Before joining UH Bristol in February last year, I was working in a community pharmacy and had never previously worked in a hospital,” says Karen Stevens, pharmacy medicines management assistant and staff governor for non-clinical healthcare professionals. “As a staff governor, you get to learn so much about how a hospital works and the pressures staff are under. Getting to grips with such a complex organisation has been a steep learning curve but it’s been enjoyable.”

Karen is one of six staff governors; Florene Jordan and Ben Trumper are governors for nursing and midwifery; Ian Davies represents medical and dental staff; Thomas Davies is governor for other clinical healthcare professionals; and Nick Marsh represents non-clinical healthcare professionals.

One of the governors’ successes since Karen took up her role was to raise awareness of a prescription drop-off service. Many patients at Bristol Eye Hospital (BEH) weren’t aware that they could collect their prescription at their local pharmacy. “A number of patients were crossing the busy road from BEH to the Bristol Royal Infirmary’s Welcome Centre to get their prescription at Boots,” says Karen. “Patients may be visually impaired so having to walk uphill and cross the road isn’t ideal. Governors helped raise awareness of the drop-off service by discussing it with the Trust Board and at the governors’ quality project group. This led to more patients being informed about the prescription drop-off option and choosing to collect their medication in their neighbourhood. It’s improved their patient experience.”

Thomas Davies, pharmacy technician, says one of the challenges he’s faced as governor is improving his operational knowledge. “There are so many abbreviations and acronyms for the different specialties and healthcare regulations that when you first enter meetings you initially miss a lot of what is going on,” he says. “I’ve enjoyed interacting with the other governors and staff members I represent.”

Nick Marsh, estates officer, says: “I would recommend that employees become a governor provided they are aware of the time commitment. I enjoy being part of a team that works with the Trust Board.”

News in brief

UH Bristol’s annual members’ meeting will take place from 5pm to 7pm at the Education and Research Centre on 15 September.

The next governor elections will take place in early 2016. If you’re interested in becoming a staff governor or finding out more about the role, please call Amanda Saunders, head of membership and governance, on 0117 34 23763.

Improving safety in cardiac surgery

A new cardiac surgery simulator is helping surgical teams enhance their teamwork skills and improve patient safety. Simon Davies investigates.

The fully immersive cardiac surgical training simulator, believed to be the only one of its kind in the world, was designed to help cardiac surgical teams at UH Bristol improve training to manage rare complications that can occur during high risk procedures.

David Grant, chair of Bristol Medical Simulation Centre and paediatric intensive care consultant, says: “The simulator comprises two devices that have been integrated to create a fully immersive realistic environment for all members of the team. The first device is a cardiopulmonary bypass perfusion simulator, Orpheus. It creates physiological parameters such as heart rate, blood pressure and central venous pressure that mirror that of a real patient.

“The second device is the beating heart simulator. It has three components: a head with airways, a chest cavity that houses the beating heart and lungs and a chest piece with skin and a ribcage including a sternum. The heart contracts and has uniquely designed, detachable components that allow surgery to be performed on the heart multiple times.”

The Orpheus connects to the beating heart simulator to form the fully immersive cardiac surgical training simulator. The equipment provides the physiological and anatomical features of a real patient, enabling the multi-professional cardiac surgical team to rehearse their roles.

David adds: “The two simulators together are like operating on a real patient. It all adds up to taking a highly proactive approach to patient safety, helping move the steep part of the learning curve away from the patient.”

The training sessions consist of a three hour tutorial where the team discusses communication and teamwork. This is followed by the simulation itself, creating a ‘real life’ situation in which complications occur, so the team can practise managing problems and working through the situation. A debrief takes place afterwards. David says the training allows staff to gain an insight into human factors and teamwork.

“The simulation is carried out within the team’s native working environment in a theatre, as this allows us and the surgical team to test the environment as well as the people, and identify anything about the environment that may need to change to ensure everything is working as well as it can be.”

For more information on governors or members’ events, please call 0117 342 3764, email foundationtrust@uhbristol.nhs.uk or visit www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/about-us/membership/events.