

PRESS RELEASE

Issued: Wednesday 3rd May 2006

New service provides hope for people who have a stroke in Lambeth and Southwark

Graham Southwood, 61, from Rotherhithe, is one of the first patients at St Thomas' Hospital to benefit from a new special emergency stroke treatment service in Lambeth and Southwark which greatly reduces the risk of serious damage following a stroke.

The service which is supported by the Modernisation Initiative for Lambeth and Southwark is available at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and King's College Hospital NHS Trust. It involves the London Ambulance Service, accident and emergency services and radiography working together to assess stroke patients and where appropriate, provide them with a 'clot busting' drug, called thrombolysis.

The Modernisation Initiative is a £15 million project funded by Guy's and St Thomas' Charity, which aims to improve stroke, kidney disease and sexual health services across Lambeth and Southwark.

Thrombolysis is a rapid clot-busting drug which given to patients within the first three hours after a stroke can dramatically reduce the area of the brain affected by a stroke. Once it enters the blood stream it immediately breaks down the fibrin which keeps the clot together. Through the new service patients brought in to the hospital receive specialist care immediately from the specialist stroke team, have scans and tests quickly on arrival and, if their condition is suitable, are treated with thrombolysis.

Graham was admitted to hospital in the early hours with no movement or vision on his left hand side, facial weakness, and slurred speech. Emergency Medical technicians Anna Williamson and Virginia Power, from the London Ambulance Service, diagnosed Graham's stroke using the 'face, arm, and speech test' and were able to make use of the special emergency stroke treatment service at St Thomas' Hospital.

Placing a 'blue' call to the hospital, they then alerted the specialist stroke team to ensure that he received the thrombolysis treatment as soon as possible. The average hospital stay for a stroke patient is 28 days, but Graham was able to go home within a couple of weeks with an almost complete recovery.

Graham said: "It is only now that I am making slow progress with my hand that I recognise the miracle of what the London Ambulance Service and St Thomas' Hospital were able to do for me."

The new service aims to treat and care for stroke as a medical emergency to improve fuller chance of recovery; increase survival rates, reduce the severity of symptoms and help more people to lead as normal a life as possible following a stroke. It provides the multi disciplinary expertise to diagnose and treat patients and is being evaluated over three years to see the impact on the 720 first-in-a-lifetime stroke patients each year in Lambeth and Southwark. So far Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust have treated 23 patients and King's College Hospital, 52 patients, with the thrombolysis drug.

Stroke Nurse Specialist at St Thomas' Hospital, Gill Cluckie, praised Anna and Virginia: "The quick actions of the crew to assess Graham correctly and then contact A&E meant that Graham was able to get the drug as soon as he arrived. The specialist care that patients receive on the stroke ward following admission is an essential part of the thrombolysis treatment and we are delighted that Graham is showing good progress with his recovery and rehabilitation", she said.

Patients, staff and the Modernisation Initiative project teams will be sharing the outcomes of the Modernisation Initiative so far at the 'Celebrating the achievements, sharing the learning' conference called on May 11th at the Mermaid Conference Centre in Puddle Dock, London, EC4. Places are free. For more information and to register visit www.modernisation-initiative.net or call 020 7188 0777.

Ends

Notes to News Editors:

1. Further information about the thrombolysis service and photographs of Graham visiting the emergency crew and stroke specialist team at St Thomas' hospital are available from Kate Dawson, Head of Communications, Guy's and St Thomas' Charity on Tel: 020 7188 1218 or out of hours: 07722 119157 or email: kate.dawson@gsttcharity.org.uk
2. Guy's and St Thomas' Charity has set aside £15 million to support the modernisation of local health care services in the areas of kidney disease, stroke and sexual health services. The initiative involves staff at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, King's College Hospital NHS Trust, Lambeth and Southwark Primary Care Trusts and South East London Strategic Health Authority. The funding has so far enabled the three project teams to develop partnerships, begin ongoing consultation and develop pilot programmes. The Initiative aims to:
 - Fast track local change and improvement initiative
 - Applies an evidence base to proposed changes
 - Involve patients and users in identifying changes
 - Bringing about cultural change that genuinely put the patients at the heart of service delivery
 - Develops sustainable improvements which can be mainstreamed by the NHS in the future

The Charity is funding an independent evaluation of the Modernisation Initiative by a team from University College London and King's College London.

3. Guy's and St Thomas' Charity is the largest NHS-related Charity in the UK. It provides funding to support health services in Lambeth and Southwark and to benefit the wider NHS. For more information contact Kate Dawson, Head of Communications on Tel: 020 7 188 1218 or out of hours mobile: 0772 2119 1570 or email: kate.dawson@gsttcharity.org.uk. You can also visit the Charity's website at www.gsttcharity.org.uk
4. Guy's and St Thomas' provides ¾ million patient contacts in acute and specialist hospital services every year. As one of the biggest NHS Trusts in the UK, it employs over 8,500 staff. The Trust also works in partnership with the Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing and Biomedical Sciences of King's College London and other Higher Education Institutes to deliver high quality education and research. Website: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk
5. Not all patients can receive thrombolysis treatment as the drug is designed to disperse the clot in the blood vessels that causes the stroke. Some strokes are caused by a bleed in the blood vessels and these patients shouldn't receive thrombolysis. Patients who have recently undergone surgery can also not be administered the drug as the anti-clotting effect may interfere with healing.

PR10
3.05.06