

Heart patient given new lease of life

Kim Smith, a 66-year-old heart attack patient, experienced a life-changing breakthrough after receiving stem cell therapy at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham (QEHB).

Amazingly, scans showed an almost complete restoration of her heart muscle function, just weeks later.

In March, Kim had a severe heart attack, which left her heart functioning dangerously low, at just 25 per cent.

When discussing her treatment options with her cardiologist, she was offered the opportunity to be part of a research trial, looking at the effectiveness of stem cell therapy in improving the heart muscle function of patients who have had a heart attack.

The therapy, developed by biotechnology company CellProthera, involves the application of a person's own stem cells directly into their heart, through the femoral artery in the leg. The patient's heart activity is then monitored for six months; at one, three and six months, using echocardiography and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Following a heart attack, about 30 per cent of patients are left with severely damaged and weakened hearts. Damage to the heart muscle can, over time, lead to life-threatening heart failure, as the heart is unable to pump the blood



around the body properly. CellProthera's therapy aims to prevent this heart failure in patients, by regenerating the damaged muscle caused by the heart attack.

Kim is one of four patients recruited at QEHB to the trial and was randomly allocated to the experimental arm of the study, meaning that she received the therapy as treatment following her heart attack. Just two weeks after receiving the therapy, Kim's heart function had returned to almost normal (55 per cent).

Kim said: "I now feel as though I can actually do what I used to do before. When I had the heart attack, I was worried that I was going to end up being stuck at home all day, but since having the stem cell therapy, psychologically and physically, I just feel so much better.

"I'm so grateful to have had this treatment, and I do hope that the research that they are doing goes forward because I think a lot of people would"

So far, about 50 patients from the UK and France have been recruited to the trial, known as the EXCELLENT (Expanded Cell Endocardial Transplantation) study. The research is currently in its final phase.

Dr Sohail Khan, Consultant Interventional Cardiologist and Lead Investigator at QEHB for the EXCELLENT study, said: "We've had great success in recruiting to this trial, and here, at QEHB, we have been one of the biggest recruiters in the UK. What we have seen so far is that actually the stem cells do seem to have a dramatic effect in terms of improving heart muscle function.

"Currently, there are few clinical options available that repair and regenerate heart tissue following a heart attack. As a result, the only option for many patients that have suffered a heart attack

and developed advanced heart failure, is a fully invasive heart transplant. This is a very serious procedure for the patient.

"The development of a cell therapy to regenerate cardiac tissue will be transformative for a considerable number of patients globally."

Matthieu de Kalbermatten, CEO at CellProthera, said: "Bringing the therapy to market as a minimally invasive therapy is vital to tackle, from the root, the harmful effects of heart attacks and improve quality of so many lives."



Exceptional care

Faye O'Reilly, Senior Sister on Ward 305 at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, has been awarded a Cavell Star Award for her exceptional care towards patients.

The award scheme is a national programme that celebrates the dedication of nurses, midwives, nursing associates and healthcare assistants across the UK, and the excellent care that they deliver to colleagues, patients and their families.

Faye has been a nurse for 21 years and has been working at UHB for the last ten years. Faye was nominated for the award by the Trust's Quality and Clinical Assurance Team.

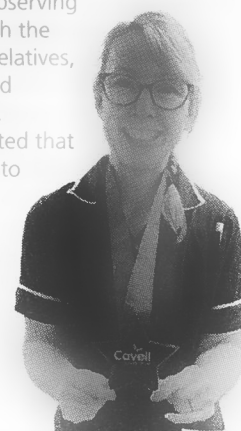
The team's nomination said: "As a team, we are collectively nominating Faye for this award in recognition of the high standard of care she delivers and inspires, for her hard work and commitment, and for her consistent professionalism in all that she does.

"As the ward's manager, she provides strong leadership, acting as a role model to her staff. She has an open, friendly manner and is welcoming to all who visit her ward.

"One of her greatest attributes is how visible she is on the ward. She is able to balance the demands and responsibilities of a ward manager, along with delivering hands on nursing care.

"Her qualities are welcomed and appreciated by those patients on her ward. This is evident by observing her interactions with the patients and their relatives, but is also expressed directly by patients.

"One patient stated that each day they look to see if Faye is on duty and when they discover that she is they 'know everything will be okay' because 'she makes me feel safe'."



Radiating success

Radiology staff, who started their career as imaging apprentices, have now become fully qualified radiographers.

Corinne Orton and Ruth Keen are the first members of staff from the imaging apprenticeship programme to top up qualifications to degree level.

Corinne, who now works at Good Hope Hospital as a diagnostic radiographer, felt that fate was on her side when she applied for the imaging assistant role.

Corinne said: "What started out as quite literally a part-time Saturday job, for a bit of extra Christmas money, turned into a career I love and want to do permanently. The job description asked for candidates with good people skills, and as I worked in family mediation, and like working with people, I thought that it could be a role that I could do. The flexibility of the role also meant I could work around family commitments.

"I feel really lucky to have progressed like this and I don't think I would have been able to do it without the support I have had from colleagues.

Both Ruth and I did the apprenticeship, then degree together, providing moral support for each other along the way. I've got more than a degree; I've made a long-term friend.

"I love working in imaging, every day is different and it's never boring. The team is great, and I never feel on my own. I also like working with students – it makes me realise how far I've come and it's great to give a little back."

Ruth started as a care assistant, before stepping into a career in radiology. Now a diagnostic radiographer at Solihull Hospital, Ruth said: "It was after being in hospital as a patient that I thought about a career in Imaging. While having scans, I saw the machines and thought 'I want to do that'. Everyone treated me so well, being caring and compassionate, so I saw how I could really make a difference to peoples' lives.

"From starting as an imaging assistant, the opportunities to progress have been amazing. The practice and education team and colleagues have been so supportive. I would've found it hard to juggle family commitments with university, so



Ruth and Corinne, right, with their awards

this unique opportunity was great for me. The teaching was online, so I was able to combine learning with developing practical skills and the strong support network at UHB has been so valuable to me. It's been amazing; I could pinch myself when I think about how far I've come.

"I now intend to do my best in my new role to deliver the best compassionate care as part of an amazing team."

For further information about imaging vacancies, go to: [Jobs \(uhb.nhs.uk\)](https://jobs.uhb.nhs.uk)

Effective leadership

Next month we will be launching Welcome to Leadership, a new leadership programme for UHB colleagues who lead, support and are responsible for developing others.

Championed by Dame Yve Buckland, Chair of UHB, and Jonathan Brotherton, our Chief Executive, the digital training programme provides the all-important building blocks for leading an effective team. It's a leadership 101 that is designed to help new and established people managers alike.

If you're passionate about your people and want to be the best leader you can be, keep an eye out for communications on Welcome to Leadership throughout October.

All you need is a UHB email and the willingness to commit a small amount of time on a regular basis in order to complete the programme.

Keep an eye out in next month's UHB Connected for more information about how to get started.