

Opening of new angiography suite at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital

On 24 June a new angiography suite was officially opened at NNUH – a landmark occasion celebrating the remarkable success of a £1 million charity appeal.

The Balloons4Hearts appeal was launched by the Norfolk Heart Trust in August 2006 following the announcement that NNUH was hoping to provide coronary angioplasty, a technique to widen the arteries to the heart using a catheter passed into a blood vessel in the groin or the arm.

The appeal was so called because in Percutaneous Coronary Intervention, or PCI, a tiny balloon is passed through the centre of the catheter and gently inflated to widen the artery, leaving a small stent in place. Providing this service at NNUH means that patients no longer need to travel to Cambridgeshire for life-saving treatment but can benefit from the technique much closer to home.



The appeal prompted a tremendous response from the public as well as many members of staff. Consultant cardiologist Dr Leisa Freeman said: “We have been overwhelmed by the public response to the appeal and thanks to the generosity of everyone involved, a thousand people a year will be able to benefit from this treatment. The official opening was our chance to mark this tremendous outcome.”



Balloons4hearts

Sometimes the biggest and best ideas are the simplest. The story of this big idea has its roots back in 2006....

Hardening of the arteries is the single greatest cause of death in Norfolk but a procedure called coronary angioplasty or PCI (percutaneous coronary intervention) can make a tremendous difference for patients whose coronary arteries become blocked.

Until recently, people who needed this life-changing procedure had to travel to Papworth Hospital in Cambridgeshire for treatment. This was frustrating for both patients and staff because we already had the expertise to provide this service at NNUH. Then along came Balloons4Hearts... the fledgling charity set out to raise £1 million to help NNUH set up a unit to treat blocked arteries – and in less than two years they succeeded.



Trust chairman David Prior said the new angiography suite had secured Norwich's position as a leading centre for coronary care. "It could not have been achieved without the passion and commitment of the Cardiology team and the generosity of so many members of the public," he said. "The next step in the evolution of coronary care is now clear – to be able to provide angioplasty 24 hours a day and to offer more electro-physiology techniques such as implantable defibrillators (see page 5) and pacemakers.

"I would like to pay tribute to Dr Leisa Freeman and her team, to Madeleine Skipper who organised the appeal, and to Dr Liam Hughes and so many others who helped to raise the profile of the appeal."

Balloons4Hearts was given the best possible start by the Geoffrey Watling Trust in July 2006, which set the ball rolling in a big way. The Chief Constable of Norfolk Constabulary and the incoming Lord Mayor of Norwich were persuaded to adopt Balloons4Hearts as one of their charities. Various people opened their gardens to the public or held private parties. Other sports-minded people played cricket, walked or rowed long distances, played in golf tournaments or jumped out of planes.

Dunston Hall adopted Balloons4Hearts as their private charity and other companies were persuaded to give substantial donations. There were all kinds of events, from quiz nights to vintage car rallies, from tea at the House of Commons to a charity ball.



Dr Liam Hughes, who rowed across the North Sea and the Atlantic to raise money for Balloons4Hearts, paid tribute to the many supporters who had given so generously to the appeal. "People have made extraordinary efforts to make this happen," he commented.

Caption:

Scenes from the opening of the new angio suite at NNUH:

- Senior nurse Paul Creasy demonstrates angioplasty using a dummy;
- Dr Leisa Freeman, cardiologist, explains the procedure to visitors;
- The story of Balloons4Hearts displayed at NNUH
- Trust Chairman David Prior thanks the many contributors to the charity appeal and presents flowers to Madeleine Skipper, the appeal fundraiser