



October 3rd, 2014

Hospital's investment in advanced technology

Seriously ill patients at South Tyneside District Hospital are the first in the North East to have the opportunity to benefit from state-of-the-art equipment which helps with their breathing.

The critical care team has introduced specialised ventilators, costing almost £240,000, in the Intensive Therapy Unit (ITU) and the first patient to take advantage of them is making excellent progress.

NAVA (Neurally Adjusted Ventilatory Assist) technology uses the electrical signal which travels from the brain to the diaphragm – the main breathing muscle – to synchronise the patient's breathing efforts more effectively.

Consultant Anaesthetist Dr Christian Frey said: "Many of our patients in ITU require support with their breathing and we are delighted that we can now offer this advanced technology. It demonstrates our commitment to investing in the best equipment in the interests of the very best patient care."

Mechanical ventilation was introduced in ITUs more than 50 years ago and treatment has relied upon a clinician adjusting airway pressure, flow and volume. With NAVA, the ventilator pressure is constantly adjusted by the patient's own brain signals. The electrical activity of the diaphragm is captured, fed to the ventilator and used to assist the patient's breathing.

Dr Frey added: "This allows a more precise and timely response from breath to breath, improving patient comfort, and it is expected to lead to shorter dependency on artificial ventilation."

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Pictured above: The photograph shows Dr Christian Frey, right, with, left to right, staff nurse Louise Gardner, auxiliary nurse Noel Kenny and staff nurse Allison Alexander

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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