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National award for leading North East gastroenterology team

The gastroenterology team at South Tyneside District Hospital have scooped a top national prize for their development of a leading centre of excellence for outstanding patient care, research, training and innovation.

The accolade was given in the SAGE Awards which recognise units, teams, networks and consultants in all areas of gastrointestinal care for their innovative work to improve patient care.

Consultant Gastroenterologist Professor Colin Rees and his colleagues have transformed gastroenterology in South Tyneside beyond all recognition in the last 10 years. As a result, they are now at the forefront for cutting edge services, particularly in relation to colonoscopy, bowel cancer screening and capsule endoscopy (a technique involving a tiny camera, swallowed as a pill, which travels through the digestive system). Patients also now have access to many of the latest treatments and technologies through the hospital's involvement in research.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executive Steve Williamson said: "This award is justly deserved. The team have done an absolutely fantastic job in putting South Tyneside on the map in terms of gastroenterology research and education and in driving up the standard of gastroenterology care, always putting quality and improved patient experience at the heart of their initiatives."

In 2006, the Trust had only a small clinical team delivering services and no research profile. Since then, the team has been expanded and, through collaboration with partners regionally, nationally and internationally, the Trust has become a key participant in many academic and commercial research studies.

Professor Rees, who is Director of Research and Development for the Trust, said: "Ours is a relatively small district general hospital but we have shown that research and innovation are not solely the preserve of large institutions with strong academic backgrounds.

"Throughout every development we've made, improving the quality of patient care and, therefore, the patient's experience, has been our driving force. It is due to the dedication and commitment of each member of the team that we have been able to rapidly transform gastroenterology in South Tyneside to the point where the Trust is recognised as a leader in the field."

As winner in the SAGE Awards, the Trust received a prize of £7,500 which will be used to further develop gastroenterology.



Notes to editors

The SAGE Awards UK grants programme, supported and funded by Shire Pharmaceuticals Ltd, is now in its sixth year. The awards are designed to allow units, teams, networks and consultants working across all areas of gastrointestinal (GI) care to be recognised for their innovative work. The programme also aims to share best practice and raise standards of GI care in the UK. The awards are judged by an independent panel.

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Pictured above: The award-winning gastroenterology team, left to right, Inflammatory Bowel Disease Nurse Specialist Emily Hopkins, Nurse Consultant Carolyn Davison, Consultant Gastroenterologists Dr Simon Panter, Professor Colin Rees and Dr Clare Parker, and Inflammatory Bowel Disease Nurse Specialist Claire Maclennan

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

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