

PRESS RELEASE – 10th October, 2017



Heart support group still going strong after 25 years

The cardiac rehabilitation support group at South Tyneside District Hospital is celebrating 25 years of helping heart patients in South Tyneside to live longer, healthy lives through exercise.

The group, which meets every Friday in the physiotherapy gym, is recognised by the British Heart Foundation and is run by the members themselves, who have all been through South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's cardiac rehabilitation programme. Activities involve floor exercises, rowing machines and exercise bikes. Cardiology service lead Jakki Colwill and Theresa Rowley, specialist nurse for cardiac rehabilitation, supervise but the members lead the group.

Chairman Ron Smith, 88, of Jarrow, who had a heart attack in 1992, is one of the original members and still attends. He said: "I'm very proud of the group, which has

helped a lot of people like me to stay alive. I really enjoy going and still take part in the exercises.”

Cardiology Consultant Dr Abdul Nasser said: “The cardiac support group do a fantastic job. Our cardiology department offers a period of cardiac rehabilitation to all of our patients after a heart attack. The support group then comes in and, through the members sharing their own experiences and giving encouragement to one another, they are able to improve their mental and physical health and overall wellbeing and prevent readmissions to hospital. There are currently more men than women in the group so we would like to encourage women, in particular, to join.”

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust Chairman Neil Mundy added: “The cardiac support group is incredibly important: for 25 years it has helped heart patients to live active, longer and healthier lives and, crucially, has helped to prevent many further heart attacks. I want to congratulate all the members over the years for their fantastic contribution to the health of people in South Tyneside.”

The idea for the group came from coronary care sister Dorothy Pearson who saw it as a good way to encourage patients to carry on with exercise following their cardiac rehabilitation programme.

Mrs Colwill said: “The support group plays an important role in helping patients lead normal lives and reduce their risk of another heart attack and it is fantastic that it is celebrating its 25th anniversary and is still going strong.

“Fortunately, we’re able to offer our patients quick access to cardiac rehabilitation, which is very effective in preventing readmission to hospital. We take an holistic approach and aim to empower patients through education about their future health, as well as aiding their physical and psychological recovery. Once they’ve made a physical recovery from the effects of a heart attack, it is recommended that people do regular physical activity, strenuous enough to leave them slightly breathless.

“Some patients find that being with other people gives them the motivation to exercise, which is why the cardiac rehabilitation support group is so helpful and, by

making it fun and sociable, they have people coming back week after week, year after year.”

Anyone wishing to contact the group should ring the cardiac rehabilitation team at the hospital on 0191 4041000, extension 3097.

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

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