

**PRESS RELEASE – SEPTEMBER 18, 2018**

**South Tyneside kidney patients benefiting from joint working  
between South Tyneside and Sunderland hospitals**



A drive to introduce earlier identification of the most severe form of acute kidney injury is helping to improve health outcomes for South Tyneside patients thanks to joint working with Sunderland and the shared expertise of the renal medicine team.

Acute kidney injury is a common problem which can result in patients becoming very sick. In its most severe form it can lead to treatment in intensive care and may require dialysis or even lead to death. It can be caused by dehydration – particularly common among elderly people suffering from flu or the Norovirus ‘winter vomiting bug’. It can also affect patients who are otherwise fit and well as it can be triggered by certain drugs and antibiotics and, in rarer cases, some diseases can cause it.

Leading UK kidney specialist, Dr Shalabh Srivastava, who last year became the first ever kidney consultant at South Tyneside District Hospital after taking up a joint post

across South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts, has been leading a quality improvement initiative to improve the management of patients who are identified as having acute kidney injury.

Steps taken to improve outcomes for South Tyneside patients include the introduction of a special education programme for junior doctors, frontline nursing staff and GPs to increase awareness about acute kidney injury, with the aim of identifying the condition at the earliest opportunity. In addition, a specific health pathway has been developed in conjunction with NHS South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to guide GPs in identifying it and following the correct treatment route.

A comparison of the results of medical care and outcomes for South Tyneside patients who developed the most severe form of acute kidney injury, or AKI-3, during a three-month period in 2016 showed a 17% overall reduction during the same period in 2017 – from 82 to 68 cases. There was also a 29% reduction in the development of AKI-3 in inpatients during their hospital stay.

Commenting on the improvements in patient care, Dr Srivastava said: “It is the duty of medical teams to recognise and manage acute kidney injury early to promote better outcomes for patients and through the work we have done over the past year we are now seeing much improved results. In the majority of cases, if it is caught early and treated, kidney damage is reversible so awareness and education – for patients and doctors – is very important.

“The overall reduction in the incidence of AKI-3 suggests that recognition of, and intervention for, acute kidney injury at an early stage is improving both in the community health setting and in hospital inpatients. A reduction in hospital admissions for the problem also indicates that earlier recognition and prompt intervention is proving effective, as does the significant improvement we have seen in the renal function of patients on discharge. We would like to thank the South Tyneside junior doctors, nursing teams and our GP colleagues who have been very supportive.”

Dr Matthew Walmsley, Chair of NHS South Tyneside CCG, said: “This is just one example of the many ways that GPs and hospital doctors are working more closely together in South Tyneside. We’re joining up how we care for people and, as projects like this show, we are improving health outcomes as a result.”

There are now two new renal medicine, or nephrology (kidney), clinics based at South Tyneside District Hospital - the newest of which was introduced in June - to support this work. The outreach clinics, which are linked to the specialist renal service provided by Sunderland Royal Hospital, give hundreds of patients a year who have a range of kidney-related disorders, including acute kidney injury, access to treatment and appointments closer to home.

The new clinics are a direct result of the partnership between South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts and demonstrate a shared commitment to see more services provided in South Tyneside as part of the Path to Excellence transformation of healthcare services across both areas. A new e-referral pathway has also been designed and implemented by Dr Saeed Ahmed, Clinical Lead of Renal Services at Sunderland, which is also improving communication across the two hospital sites and prompt treatment for kidney patients.

Dr Srivastava and a group of junior doctors presented the data from the quality improvement initiative at a national meeting of the Renal Association and the British Renal Society. The work has also been accepted for presentation at the annual meeting of the American Society of Nephrology in October this year.

The aim now is to appoint a few junior doctors as ‘AKI champions’ to spread awareness among the frontline workforce and work in collaboration with other North East Trusts to further reduce AKI.

Dr Srivastava’s arrival at South Tyneside District Hospital a year ago has been a real coup for the South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group. Attracted by the partnership working between the two hospitals and the ability to practise both acute medicine and his specialism of renal medicine, Dr Srivastava also plays a critical role as part of the acute medicine team in South Tyneside.

**ENDS**

Photo caption: *Kidney specialist Dr Shalabh Srivastava with junior doctors Maddy Brazell, Anna Robinson and Jonny Chernick*

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