

**Healthwatch Cheshire West Enter and View Report - NHS**

<b>Enter and View Visit to</b>	<b>Ward 50 'Newgate' Countess of Chester Hospital</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> June 2015 arriving at 1.30 pm</b>
<b>Authorised Representatives</b>	<b>Margaret McDermott and Neil Garbett</b>
<b>Staff Present</b>	<b>Catrina Witkiss - Acting Ward Manager and Naomi Cawley - Deputy Ward Manager</b>
<b>Background</b>	<p>Newgate - Ward 50 is a 28 bed medical ward caring for patients with haematology and endocrinology disorders. These aside, the ward also appears to care for a number of varied acute illness conditions and at the time of our visit had received two recent admissions directly from A&amp;E. Newgate is a very busy ward with many long stay patients. Representatives understand that the ward works closely with the oncology unit.</p> <p>The ward was separated into male and female sections with up to six patients in each bay plus individual side rooms. The duration of patient stay on the ward appeared to vary a lot from a few days to a few months.</p> <p>At the time of our visit all beds were occupied by patients having a broad age range from 40 - 85 years.</p>
<b>Overall Impression</b>	<p>This appears as a busy ward with lots going on. In terms of care all patients spoken to were quite gushing in praise for staff described as working extremely hard and who supported patients extremely well. In this busy environment storage of equipment seemed to be an issue with many items pushed to side spaces that were 'best fit.'</p> <p>Quite a number of patients complained about the 'Hospicom' entertainment/communication equipment being expensive and often not working. People were also concerned that the cost of incoming calls to this unit was around 40 pence per minute as charged to the person making the call.</p> <p>Patients privacy and dignity respected.</p>
<b>Any ideas or suggestions for improving service?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved storage for equipment as well as medication and fluids.</li> <li>• Increased staffing levels - Representatives feel this would significantly reduce staff pressure and allow further improvements in patient care.</li> <li>• Improved wifi signal for patients</li> <li>• Catrina said although not essential it would help with work flow if they had more observational equipment commenting that perhaps this was something "Friends of the Hospital" may consider supporting.</li> </ul>

## Welcoming

Staff welcomed the two representatives onto the ward and appeared open when discussing their role. At the time of our visit first impressions were one of quite a busy environment but generally well organised and calm.

At the time of our visit quite a few patients had visitors present.

## Safety

The ward appeared safe, clean and well maintained and all bathrooms and toilets were spotless.

Storage of equipment did appear as a problem with most equipment that was not in use pushed to a vacant free side space. Staff commented on the need for improved storage for fluids and medication. Representatives understand that a safety brief is done every morning.

**Staffing** - Representatives were informed that the staffing levels are:

- Daytime - Four Senior Registered Nurses (SRNs) plus four Health Care Assistants (HCAs)
- Late shift - Four SRNs plus three HCAs
- Night shift - Two SRNs plus two HCAs.

The ward has one ward clerk working five days a week. She said that when she wasn't on duty, "**Staff have to fend for themselves.**" Adding, "**This puts more pressure on nursing staff.**"

As mentioned this is a very busy ward with many long stay patients. Catrina's feeling was that that the ward was under-staffed for the care they needed to give to patients and commented, "**An extra HCA was needed on every shift and one extra SRN on the night shift.**"

Representatives feel that it must be very difficult to manage acutely ill and dementia patients with limited staff.

## Caring and Involving

Representatives observed staff and patients interacting well.

Without exception all patients spoken to by representatives as well as those relatives visiting at the time, were full of praise for all members of staff and commented on how hard they all work. One patient who had been on the ward for some time commented, (in referring to one nurse in particular pointed out), "**I have no idea how she keeps going - the other day she had a really busy night time shift and you could see she both physically stressed and tired but she still kept smiling and would do anything for you.**"

A lady told a Representative that she could not fault the staff, "**They were all lovely and approachable.**" However, she felt, "**The menus needed to change more often as they are the same every week which was not good when you were an inpatient for many weeks!**" In addition she commented on the timing of lunchtime meals. "**They come before or at midday which I think is too early.**"

A gentleman stated had no complaints, "**The staff were brilliant!**"

Another gentleman and his wife told a Representative that, "**The medical care was excellent... the doctors explained things in lay man terms which was very helpful.**" He was waiting for a bed to become available on the coronary ward.

A patient told Representatives that he had no complaints the staff were marvellous and always had time for you, *“I am well looked after.”*

A gentleman said, *“The nurses know the patients better than the doctors.”*

Patients made additional comments:

- *“I have been here a while and they have always looked after me.”*
- *“I know I can be grumpy at times and they always cope with my moods.”*
- *“The staff are always, always busy but they still look after us.”*
- *“There is never a spare bed here... they are busy night and day!”*

A number of patients felt that the ward needed extra staff. One lady who had been on the ward for many months described herself as an *‘expert’* for what went on. *“They need more staff here definitely - these girls are having to work their butts off!”*

When Representatives spoke to the ward manager to ask what she would like to improve if given a magic wand, Catrina commented, *“Definitely more staff.”* Other staff also commented on this and also the need for additional storage.

### Well organised and calm

Overall Representatives felt that there was considerable organisation and efficiency on the ward and that this was essential for the wide variation in the patient conditions treated. At the time of our visit the ward was quiet and with quite a number of visitors on the ward those patients who wanted it appeared to have privacy. One set of relatives who spoke to Representatives commented on how they appreciated the flexibility of visiting times.

### Additional Comments

**TV/Phone** - A number of patients commented on the ‘Hospicom’ entertainment/communication system. One patient who had been on the ward for several months commented that *“At £4 a day it is too expensive!”*

Another male patient commented that, [he] *“Would rather pay money to get a decent broadband signal.”*

Another relative commented about the system - *“It’s often difficult to get through and when you do I think it costs about 40 pence per minute. I rang mum from a mobile and lost all my credit in one call. I know you can use mobile phones in the hospital but mum finds them difficult.”*

**Systems** - One set of relatives commented on how they had been impressed with the systems in place at the hospital with their elderly mother being admitted to the ward from A&E. They had felt extremely reassured by staff that their mother was receiving the best of care something that was extremely important to them as they lived quite a distance from the hospital. They had been impressed by the way that systems had seemed to work with, *“Mother not being stressed by it all.”*

**Discharge problems** - We were told that it was often difficult to discharge the Welsh patients due to poor Social Care liaison on the Welsh side.

**Ward information** - Although there was a board outside the ward with illustrations of the different uniforms there was no ward information and no details about who worked on the ward (with photographs ideally) to inform patients and relatives who was who !

Representatives would like to thank Catrina and her staff for being open, honest and willing to talk to us also patients and relatives who also appeared keen to talk to us.

#### Feedback from Provider of Service

*Ward 50 is a busy ward and staff work extremely hard in sometimes challenging circumstances. Our main aim is to give the best care we possibly can, so it is heart-warming to know that all the patients and their relatives gave such positive feedback on the care that they receive.*

*With the support of senior nurse management, I am currently reviewing the staffing levels on the ward so that we can improve our level care.*

*Although not able to extend the ward for extra storage we are looking at ways in which we can optimise the storage space we have.*

*We will definitely be taking the advice of the Representatives and creating a who's who board with photographs for the ward.*