

Welcome to Critical Care

Information produced by
Annette Richardson, Nurse Consultant (Critical Care)
Mike Kelleher Practitioner Lecturer (Critical Care)
August 2002
Reviewed November 2004
Review November 2006

**Peri-Operative and Critical Care
Directorate**

The aim of this information leaflet is to provide information and advice to visitors while visiting Critical Care.

Critical Care consists of several Units and Ward areas throughout the Trust's hospitals that are designed to support patients while they recover from serious illness or surgical procedures. They consist of:

- Intensive Therapy Units where patients receive maximum support for their illness or surgery, and
- High Dependency Units, where patients receive specialist support for their illness, following surgery and accidents or as a progression from Intensive Therapy Units as they recover.

The Trust's Critical Care areas are all mixed sex areas, accommodating both male and female patients in combinations of open bays and single patient cubicles. This is to allow close observation of our patients, or sometimes in the case of cubicles, to control infection. It is also because of the equipment needed around each bed area. However, to ensure the privacy and dignity of our patients, all bed areas are fitted with either curtains or blinds.

Finally

- Thank you for reading this information leaflet, we hope that it will be of help. However, if there is any further information or advice you need, please ask.
- If you have any comments good or bad about your time with us, please let us know, as it helps us to improve our care.

Unit Name _____

The Unit is situated

The Unit telephone numbers for enquiries are:

Hospital 0191 233 6161 Ext.

(Direct dial 0191)

Named Nurse _____

Other Facilities

- Hospital Chaplains visit regularly to chat and provide support. The nursing staff can contact one of your own denomination if you wish.
- There are shop and restaurant facilities within all of the trust's hospitals. Please ask staff for directions.
- Accommodation may be available for relatives of critically ill patients who live some distance from the hospital.
- Visitors should access and pay for hospital parking as directed at the Pay and Display in the car parking areas. In special circumstances, with the approval of the nurse in charge of the unit, it may be possible to make a local arrangement for immediate relatives/next of kin to park their car when visiting for prolonged periods.
- Translators are available for those people who cannot speak English.

Quiet Time

Between 2.00pm and 3.30pm, the Unit has a quiet time. This time is important as rest aids healing and recovery. During this time all visitors are encouraged to leave to let the patient rest. However, in special circumstances, with the approval of the nurse in charge of the unit, limited visits may be possible.

Outreach

Critical Care has an Outreach team who follow patients through the Units and visit them once they go to the wards. This is part of a routine follow-up procedure to monitor progress. The team can be identified easily as all wear sister/charge nurse uniforms when on the unit and when visiting patients on the wards.

Telephone Enquires

- Enquires are welcome at any time, day or night. In the case of large families could we request that one family member be elected to enquire and then pass on messages to the rest of the family.

Visiting

- On most Critical Care Units visiting hours are open, however mornings are often very busy and Intensive Therapy Units have quiet periods in the afternoons where patients are encouraged to rest without interruption to aid their recovery.
- Visitors will/may be asked to leave during ward rounds.
- Visitors may be asked to wait while we carry out procedures. This is unavoidable.
- On arrival, please press the doorbell and wait until a member of staff can attend to you.

Visitors Room

- Visitor rooms are available for your use. We try our best to get you into the Unit to see your relative or friend as soon as possible. If you feel you have been waiting for a long time, please ring the doorbell and let a member of staff know. If you would like to see a doctor concerning your relative please ask the nurse looking after them.

Hand washing

- All medical, nursing staff and visitors must wash their hands before entering and on leaving the Unit to prevent infection.
- All visitors should remove their coats (or equivalent) and leave them on the hooks provided before entering the Unit, but should take any valuables with them.

Inside the Unit

- Mobile phones must be turned off before entering the Hospital, but especially before entering any Critical Care area as their signals can interfere with electronic equipment and may endanger patient safety.
- Critical Care Units can be quite busy places and often alarms will sound. They do not mean that anything is wrong. They are usually reminding us to do something, such as change a drip.

Unit Staff

- Staff may be identified by their name badges and by introducing themselves.
- A doctor is readily available at all times.
- In the Critical Care units there will be one to two nurses for every patient per shift.
- Physiotherapists visit regularly to help patients to exercise and to help them clear their chests to prevent or treat possible infection.

At the Bedside

- All patients are attached to a monitor that shows heart rhythm, pulse and blood pressure.
- They often receive oxygen from facemask, or a ventilator (breathing machine) if they need help to breathe.
- The nurse at the bedside will explain all the equipment when you visit if required.

What can you do?

- If a patient is on a ventilator they will not be able to have a conversation very easily.
- Use questions that allow simple yes or no answers.
- Talk about family news or if you wish, simply hold their hand to show that you are there.
- You can bring in photographs and cards as they recover, favourite music tapes/CD's can often help patients to rest and relax. Some Units have limited access to CD players, etc. Please ask staff for details.
- Due to limited space, usually only two people can be at the bedside at a time, but this is flexible as circumstances allow.
- Regrettably we cannot allow fresh flowers into the Unit for infection control reasons.
- Within the Trust's hospitals there is a strict no smoking policy. For those who wish to smoke please ask the unit staff for directions to the designated smoking areas for the hospital you are visiting.