

OUR DOCTOR WRITES – JULY 2018

Happy 70th Birthday

No, not me, the NHS is 70 years old. On the 5th of July 1948 the NHS was launched by the then Health Secretary, Aneurin Bevan. It was created from the ideal that good healthcare should be available to all, regardless of wealth. For the first time hospitals, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, opticians and dentists were brought together under one umbrella to provide services to meet the needs of everyone, to be free at the point of delivery and to be based on clinical need, not ability to pay.

Over the last 70 years the health and wellbeing of the nation has been transformed by the NHS delivering huge medical advances and improvements to public health.

1950s

Diseases such as polio and diphtheria were eradicated following the vaccination programme launched in 1958. In 1959 the Mental Health Act made new provisions for prioritising community care for people with mental health problems and for the first time it was recognised that patients with mental ill health should not be considered any different from other types of sick people.

1960s

The first UK kidney transplant was performed in 1960 and the first heart transplant in 1968. The contraceptive pill was made widely available in 1961, the Abortion Act introduced in 1967, fertility treatment in 1968 and the first test tube baby was born as a result of invitro fertilisation in 1978. All revolutionised family planning and women's health. The first hip replacement became a practical reality in 1962.

1970s

CT scans introduced in 1972 and MRI scanning in 1980 changed forever the way doctors examine the body. In 1979 the first successful bone marrow transplant improved cure rates for leukaemia and lymphoma.

1980s

Keyhole surgery was pioneered in the 1980s and with it came reduced post operative recovery times. Further vaccination programmes for measles, mumps and rubella and better antenatal care improved the healthcare of mothers and babies in the 80s. After a number of high profile deaths, the AIDS advertising campaign shocked in 1986. 1987 saw the first heart, lung and liver transplant performed. In order to reduce breast cancer deaths in women over the age of 50, breast screening was introduced in 1988.

The 1990s brought changes to the structure of the NHS with the Community Care Act and the establishment of NHS trusts. As a result healthcare services increasingly focused on care in the community, challenging the domination of the hospitals. Further restructuring occurred in 2013 when NHS trusts were abolished in favour of Clinical Commissioning Groups. Following a 5 year campaign, the NHS organ donor register was set up in 1994. Dolly the sheep was cloned in 1996. NHS direct was launched in 1998, replaced in 2014 by 111.

2000

The first successful gene therapy was carried out at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in 2002. Gene therapy results in the repair of mutated genes enabling some inherited diseases and cancers to be cured. Bowel screening started in 2006. A robotic arm was used in heart surgery in 2007 and robots are now being used widely in other surgical specialities. The highly informative NHS Choices website was launched in 2007. Vaccination for girls aged 12/13 against human papilloma virus was introduced in 2008 to help prevent cancer of the cervix. The NHS constitution was published in 2009. This important document defines what the staff, patients and public can expect from the NHS. More recent campaigns have focused on stroke prevention (F.A.S.T), NHS health checks, abdominal aortic screening for all 65 year old men, improving access to psychological therapies and the 2016 One You campaign encourages middle aged adults to take control of their health to address diseases which can be prevented like type 2 diabetes and lung cancer.

I am proud to have a tiny, but very important role in this amazing institution. I am very grateful and appreciate how fortunate I am to live in the only country in the world whose healthcare service is free at the point of delivery. Despite the increasing demands on the NHS I believe that the core principles should endure and access for all should remain free. As part of the 70th birthday celebrations the NHS has some suggestions about how you can help give something back to the service.

Become an organ donor and give blood.

Get involved in research projects.

Become a volunteer.

Take care of yourself - healthy lifestyle and attend free NHS health check every 5 years.

Join the NHS team - there are more than 350 different careers on offer.

Pledge to use the NHS wisely. For example pledge to attend your appointments. 12 million GP appointments are missed annually at a cost of £500 million! Only order medicine you need. Think before you attend A&E. 9 million people were sent home from A&E in 2016/17 with just advice they could have got from a pharmacist or by calling 111.

The NHS Big7Tea - come and join us from 12 on Thursday 5th July and raise a cuppa and eat cake to celebrate. Any donations will be donated to a NHS charity.

For more information about any of the above suggestions at www.nhs70.nhs.uk.

Let's celebrate the NHS!

Be well,

Dr Angela Paddon