

the GIST

News from Guy's and St Thomas' Issue 45 | 2024



Jumping for joy

Flying high with
a new transplant

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Welcome

At Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, serving our patients and communities is at the heart of everything we do.

As part of this, we have recently launched our new values and a 5-year strategy. This was developed with input from our patients and staff, and is an exciting moment for us to set out our plans for how we will continue to deliver better,

faster, fairer healthcare for all. You can read more about this, on page 16.

Our magazine cover star is Gloria Sirbu, a 3-year-old who received a life-saving kidney transplant at Evelina London Children's Hospital. Her inspirational story, the fantastic work of our transplant teams, and the importance of organ donation, can be found on page 12.

Guy's and St Thomas' is currently the only NHS Trust in London to offer a dental nursing apprenticeship. Turn to page 18 to learn more about this exciting apprenticeship and how it is helping to build the next generation of dental nurses.

We have also been supporting new research to improve patient care. This includes two clinical trials to treat haemophilia B patients with gene therapies for the first time and to prevent children from developing food allergies. Find out more on pages 6 and 7.

Did you know that modern cataract surgery was first developed at St Thomas' Hospital? In the History Corner on page 21, you can learn more about Sir Harold Ridley, an ophthalmologist, who helped invent the surgery 75 years ago.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the GiST.

Professor Ian Abbs, Chief Executive Officer (He/Him)
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Meet the team

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TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

If you have any comments about the magazine or suggestions for future articles, please contact

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Dental relief for cancer patients

The dental team at Guy's and St Thomas' have developed a solution to safely remove teeth in cancer patients in need of oral surgery.

Currently, patients taking certain cancer and osteoporosis medications are advised not to have any invasive dental treatment.

These medications affect the jaw bone's ability to heal, and when paired with surgery, increase the risk of the jaw bone dying, known as osteonecrosis.

Dentists can often be reluctant to remove teeth to avoid causing osteonecrosis, which may leave patients in pain and with no treatment option.

Now, thanks to a new protocol led by Mr Vinod Patel, lead for dental services for cancer at the Trust, patients at risk of osteonecrosis can have their teeth removed.

The protocol, which causes minimum



Mr Vinod Patel with patient Cathie O'Neill

disruption to a patient's cancer care, has a 99% success rate.

Cathie O'Neill, 71, developed osteonecrosis following osteoporosis and breast cancer treatment.

After successful treatment of osteonecrosis once before, Cathie began to develop tooth ache several years later.

Following the new protocol, Cathie has now had her teeth removed, and says it was the best thing that could have happened to her.

IN THE NEWS

A round-up of media coverage featuring Guy's and St Thomas'

BBC Gardeners' World

The Amputee Rehabilitation Unit in Lambeth was a key location in BBC2's Gardeners' World, as it explored how the garden is used to support patients' recovery after limb amputation, and helps boost their self-confidence. Gardener and rehabilitation assistant Joe Scoble was filmed, alongside patients Tatiana, Christine and Luke. The patients explained how the garden had helped them with their rehab.



The Guardian

National media including The Guardian wrote about new research that has found that a bacteria is toxic for head and neck cancer and may lead to better outcomes for patients. The research, between Guy's and St Thomas' and King's College London, included support from Guy's Cancer Charity. It looks at fusobacterium, a type of bacteria commonly found in the mouth, which appears to have the ability to kill certain cancers.

BBC London

A reporter for BBC London joined abseilers descending St Thomas' Hospital to raise money for the Trust's charities. The piece included interviews with Laura Savory, interim director of fundraising at the charities, as well as staff member Linda Connelly and the family of Evelina London patient, baby Henry.

New pacemaker technology



Staff at Royal Brompton Hospital

A new pacemaker system to treat patients with complex heart rhythm conditions has been successfully used for the first time in the UK at Royal Brompton and St Thomas' hospitals.

The wireless system is made up of two devices, smaller than an AAA battery. Implanted into two chambers of the heart via a catheter, the devices communicate with one another to make the patient's heart beat with a regular rhythm so that blood is pumped more efficiently around the body.

Professor Tom Wong, consultant cardiologist and electrophysiologist at Royal Brompton Hospital, carried out the first procedure. He said: "This new technology allows us to offer a unique opportunity to treat patients with complex heart disorders.

"The ability for the two individual pacemakers to work together to regulate the rhythm of separate chambers of the heart is a major leap forward in technology, and will allow us to help a wider range of patients to improve their quality of life, and in some cases to extend their life expectancy."



Bert Janssen, Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub and Clive Donaghue

Longest surviving heart transplant recipients reunited with surgeon

Two heart transplant recipients marked their 40th anniversaries with a visit to Harefield Hospital where they were reunited with the staff who gave them life-saving care.

Bert Janssen and Clive Donaghue underwent heart transplants in 1984 when they were 18 and 12 years old.

Bert, now 58, needed a heart transplant as a result of developing cardiomyopathy. The disease affects the heart muscle making it harder to pump blood to the rest of the body.

Clive, now 52, received his transplant after being diagnosed with familial dilated cardiomyopathy – an inherited form of the same condition as Bert.

They were reunited with Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub, who performed both of their transplant operations, as well as the cardiologist who treated them after their transplants, Dr Andrew Mitchell, and a previous sister in the transplant clinic, Rita Presnail.

Bert was recognised as one of the world's longest heart transplant survivors earlier this year.

Blood samples to be delivered by drones



Urgent blood samples will be transported by electric drones in a medical delivery service which aims to improve patient care by speeding up turnaround times.

Moving samples between Guy's Hospital and the lab at St Thomas' Hospital can take more than half an hour by road but takes less than 2 minutes by drone.

This enables quicker analysis, helping to efficiently determine whether patients are safe to undergo surgery or be discharged.

The trial will deliver blood samples for

patients undergoing surgery who are at high risk of complications from bleeding disorders.

Blood samples are currently delivered by van and motorbike couriers. Switching to drone deliveries will also have significant environmental benefits by removing carbon emissions and reducing traffic congestion.

The initiative is a partnership between Guy's and St Thomas'; Apian, a healthcare logistics company founded by NHS doctors; and Wing, a global drone delivery company that is part of Google's parent company, Alphabet.

Your voice

We love to hear from our patients, staff and supporters so join the conversation by following us on Facebook, X (previously known as Twitter), LinkedIn and YouTube.

@charitablemark (from X)

I'm finding the NHS App such a wonderful tool in my interactions with staff whilst an inpatient here @GSTTnhs. I hadn't realised how extensive the data is. It's been transformative and will help make my discharge better for me and the hospital. Analogue to digital in action!

Alexandra Blanchflower (from Facebook)

And that's it for our stay at the Royal Brompton Hospital, we have been here for 166 days! There have been so many tears, hugs, laughter. We can't thank you enough for being part of our journey, we love you and will miss you all.



@EmmelineLagunes (from X)

The pre-op selfie, there's no post, but surgery (tonsillectomy) went well. I can only thank everyone at @GSTTnhs hospital, everyone was so caring, kind and professional. Now to recover at home.

@EmilyNics (from X)

Thank you so much to the incredible team @GSTTnhs for last week whilst my Dad was taken ill and had to stay in hospital. They were absolutely amazing throughout.





Tony attended a workshop on how to use the MyChart app

Easier access to healthcare records

When you're having hospital care, it is so important to have easy access to your letters and test results.

The MyChart app and online portal now provides patients at Guy's and St Thomas' and King's College Hospital with easy and secure access to their health records from

their smartphone, tablet or computer.

Using MyChart, patients can also answer questions from the clinical team before arriving at their appointment. This can save valuable time, allowing patients to talk about the things that matter most.

Tony, a patient who usually finds technology challenging, recently attended a workshop run by ClearCommunityWeb to learn how to use the MyChart app.

He said: "I was a technophobe, I have nieces and nephews who grew up with tech, and they would always say to me 'why are you a dinosaur?'"

"We went through all the basics, and it was enlightening. I became comfortable logging in using the browser, and I didn't need to wait for a text to log in. I use it now to check messages, and records, and keep in touch with my healthcare team. At first I was very reluctant but now I would say to anyone – go for it."

Parents and carers can use MyChart to manage their child's care. Adult patients can also give trusted friends and family access to their account to manage their healthcare on their behalf.

To find out more, visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/mychart/sign-up

Support group for stroke survivors



Steve Ridley with wife Agnieszka

Guy's and St Thomas' community stroke team has set up the Lambeth Stroke Peer Support Group to help people get advice from experts, share experiences and make new friendships with other stroke survivors.

The sessions run every other week for 10 weeks.

Participants get advice on preventing further strokes, the importance of family and friends, maintaining links with the community, exercise and diet.

There is also advice on managing mood and fatigue, and the importance of purpose, fun and joy after a stroke.

Steve Ridley, from Streatham, is a project manager and had a stroke in July 2022.

He received 6 months of hospital treatment followed by intensive rehabilitation, and support from the community therapists at the Pulross Centre.

The 52-year-old said: "Sometimes I struggle to explain to people why I'm a bit slow in my speech or forget things. But with the group you realise you are not the only one out there. You are not on your own."



Photo credit: Andy Keate

A mural celebrating the contribution of African women in healthcare was unveiled outside the refurbished Nuffield Theatre Suite at Guy's Hospital. The artwork features 6 pioneering women who represent a range of eras – from contemporary people, like current occupational therapist Metian Parsanka, to historical health workers.

Grania Hyde-Smith

finds out about a clinical trial that is transforming the lives of patients with a rare blood disorder.

“I am now able to do the things I love but couldn’t do before, including playing football and riding my bike.”



Patient Youssef Arafat is now cured of haemophilia B

Gene therapy trial success

Youssef Arafat became the first patient with haemophilia B – a rare blood clotting disorder – to be successfully treated with a new gene therapy at Guy’s and St Thomas’.

Gene therapy aims to fix a faulty gene or replace it with a healthy gene to try to cure a disease or make the body better able to fight disease.

Youssef suffered years of internal bleeding as a result of his condition, which led to movement issues and severe pain in his ankles and arms.

In 2021, he was offered the chance to take part in a gene therapy clinical trial at the Trust. It involved a single infusion followed by regular check-ups over a year, as well as steroids and an immunosuppressant to stop his body rejecting the treatment.

Youssef said: “The improvement after the infusion was immediate. I cannot thank the team enough for the fantastic care I received and for all their kindness, not only

during the treatment but also in the years leading up to the trial and even now. Their care has been exemplary.”

The 27-year-old added: “I am now able to do the things I love but couldn’t do before, including playing football and riding my bike. I recently fell off my bike and injured both knees. Normally, this injury would have set me back for weeks so it was great to wake up the next morning knowing that I wouldn’t have to go through all that again. It gave me a new sense of freedom.”

Dr Gerry Dolan, consultant haematologist and Director of the Haemophilia Centre at Guy’s and St Thomas’, said: “Youssef has had a fantastic response to an innovative trial of gene therapy for haemophilia B. This achievement was the result of amazing teamwork involving clinical trials teams, specialist pharmacy and haematology medical and nursing staff.

“Youssef has been a model trial patient and his experience will greatly benefit other patients.”

“Youssef has been a model trial patient and his experience will greatly benefit other patients.”

Gene therapy for haemophilia B will soon be available on the NHS so more patients are expected to receive the life-changing treatment in the coming months.

Fast Facts

- There are currently around **2,000 people in the UK who live with haemophilia B**
- The condition is usually **inherited and most people who have it are male**
- People with haemophilia B **take longer than normal for bleeding to stop** because a specific protein is missing from the blood so that injured blood vessels cannot heal in the usual way
- Gene therapy works by artificially creating a working version of the missing protein

Daisy Holden

learns more about a clinical trial aimed at preventing food allergies.

Assessing children's eczema



Baby Yusra has been accepted onto the SEAL trial

A ground-breaking clinical trial is underway at Evelina London Children's Hospital and King's College London aimed at preventing children from developing food allergies.

The SEAL (Stopping Eczema and Allergy) trial is available for babies aged from birth to 12 weeks if they have any signs of dry skin or eczema.

Previous research has shown that if a baby develops eczema before the age of 3 months and needs to use prescribed steroid cream on their skin, they are 50% more likely to develop a food allergy.

The new trial aims to prevent children from developing a food allergy by restoring the skin barrier and managing inflammation. It's hoped this will prevent the transfer of food allergens through the skin.

The participants will be allocated 1 of 2 different treatment plans. In the first group, skin complaints will be managed reactively by the baby's healthcare team, addressing flare-ups of eczema as they arise.

In the second group, babies will follow

a proactive plan, where moisturisers for the skin are prescribed for daily use, and steroids for the skin are used proactively for eczema flare-ups.

Both groups will receive regular virtual check-ins with the study team to monitor progress and provide support.

Each participant will be on the trial for 2 years, and during that time will be reviewed by the clinical team 3 times at Evelina London's specialist allergy research centre. They will also take part in regular food allergy tests and a food challenge at their final visit.

Dr Farhana Rahman's 8-week-old daughter, Yusra, has been accepted onto the trial.

Farhana, from south Croydon, said: "My hope is that this trial could reduce the risk of my baby developing food allergies, something she may be at higher risk of since I have eczema and allergic conditions myself.

"As a GP I know how challenging these can be to manage, so I'm excited that through leading-edge research like the SEAL study, we may be able to avoid food

allergies developing in the first place – not only in my daughter but in other children in the future too.

"But ultimately as a mum I just want to do what's best for my child, so I feel reassured knowing my baby and I will be in safe hands with world-leading experts guiding treatment and specialists supervising our care every step of the way."

Professor Helen Brough, professor of paediatric allergy at Evelina London and King's College London, and joint trial lead, said: "We have known for years that eczema is the strongest risk factor for developing a food allergy. In the SEAL study, we can evaluate whether we can target the skin of children with eczema to prevent a food allergy. We're pleased to be opening this new clinical trial, and hope it will make a difference for the next generation."

Evelina London is the only hospital in the UK taking part in the trial.

To enrol your child or for more information, please email gst-tr.sealstudy@nhs.net

Alana Cullen speaks to an Evelina London patient who has future dreams of dressage at the Paralympics thanks to the children's hospital.

Govind was the youngest to compete in the 2024 Riding for the Disabled Association national championships

Helping patients achieve their dreams

Govind Nambiar started horse riding when he was 5 years old.

Since then, the young sportsman has gone from strength to strength. He was the former national UK junior dressage champion and earlier this year was the youngest to compete in the 2024 Riding for the Disabled Association national championships, placing him 4th in the overall rankings.

Govind, who has cerebral palsy, a movement disorder affecting all his limbs, first took up horse riding on the recommendation of his doctor at Evelina London Children's Hospital to help him strengthen his muscles.

Since their initial recommendation, Govind fell in love with the sport and the Evelina London team have continued to nurture his passion.

The teen, from Bexleyheath in south east London, has had 3 orthopaedic operations at the specialist children's hospital to help his movement.

He underwent lengthening surgeries to his shortened lower limb muscles aged 8 and 10, and in 2022 had an osteotomy, a major surgery to his shinbone to correct its alignment and help him to walk with more comfort and stability.

Thanks to this recent surgery by Mr Michail Kokkinakis, consultant paediatric orthopaedic surgeon at Evelina London, after 6 months of intensive rehabilitation, Govind is now able to walk, and sit on his horse, more comfortably.

Govind's mum, Kavitha Nambiar, said: "Mr Kokkinakis is very considerate about the future and not just the immediate fix when it comes to surgery, he always does what is best for the child in their circumstances."

Govind was thrilled to be able to return to training at Arrow Riding Club after his surgery.

The 16-year-old said: "As a therapy it is one of the best things you can do, it strengthens all of your muscles and improves your overall condition. Horse riding also helps my mental

health and lets me escape from reality. The horse is such a therapeutic animal."

Govind was recently confirmed to be on the British Equestrian Federation Para entry programme. The programme enables disabled riders to compete on equal terms against each other, and will help support him to progress towards his goal.

Govind said: "My dream is to get to

Paralympics level – I will push as much as I can to get there."

The aspiring Paralympian receives care from a team of specialists at Evelina London including occupational therapists, physiotherapists, neurologists, and surgeons.

Mr Kokkinakis, said: "It has been a privilege to watch Govind grow into a young man, and see how his care at Evelina London has helped him gain confidence and strength, and a passion for his sport. We are all so proud of him and his incredible achievements."

In addition to his sporting achievements, Govind is also one of the stars of Evelina London Children's Charity's most recent campaign to showcase how they support the incredible care at Evelina London.

The charity's support allowed surgeons to access the latest 3D software which helps them to plan delicate surgeries, like Govind's, before they enter the operating theatre, making surgeries more precise.

Barbara Kasumu, Executive Director of Evelina London Children's Charity, said: "It is a privilege to support Evelina London. From play at a child's bedside, to the leading-edge technology used to help make Govind's surgery more precise and improve the long term outcome, these moments all add up to the incredible care patients and their families receive."

"My dream is to get to Paralympics level – I will push as much as I can to get there."

How Evelina London Children's Charity supports our hospital and community

- **Compassionate, trailblazing care:** Making Evelina London feel more like home, by designing wards that provide a sanctuary for families and play spaces for children.
- **Exploring new approaches:** Funding world-leading research and developing innovative ways to transform care including investing in pioneering technology.
- **Supporting the team:** Providing the very latest training and development opportunities to the devoted team who are at the heart of what makes Evelina London so incredible.



Daisy Holden

speaks to the team supporting boys with a rare condition.

Specialist service for genetic condition



Jackson is one of the first patients to be treated at the new clinic

Evelina London Children's Hospital has become the first in Europe to launch a dedicated clinic to support boys with the rare condition, Klinefelter syndrome.

Males with the condition are born with an extra X chromosome. Typically, a male baby has one X and one Y chromosome and a female baby has two X chromosomes. The condition affects around 1 in every 660 males.

In adulthood, Klinefelter syndrome can cause male infertility, osteoporosis, and increase the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

The condition can also cause problems with learning, attention, energy levels and socialising. It can affect

muscles, testicles, and the growth of facial and body hair.

Infertility or a decrease of testosterone can be treated with specialist hormone replacement therapy. However, patients need access and support from a range of specialists, from geneticists to psychologists.

Alessandra Cocca, consultant in paediatric endocrinology and lead for the paediatric Klinefelter clinic at Evelina London, said: "This clinic specifically caters for the needs of children, and provides tailored advice and support as their symptoms develop before they reach puberty."

The new one-stop-shop clinic, run by

staff at Evelina London and Guy's and St Thomas', brings all these specialities together in one setting for boys up to the age of 14.

Children are reviewed at 5 and 10 years old, and then each year throughout puberty. When they are 14, they will move on to the young person's clinic at Guy's Hospital to continue their care.

There is a lack of knowledge about Klinefelter syndrome and it can take some patients many years to get a diagnosis. Usually young people are diagnosed after experiencing behavioural and developmental problems at school.

Mel, from Lincolnshire, attended the



The children's Klinefelter clinic team at St Thomas' Hospital's Rare Diseases Centre

new clinic with her 8-year-old son Jackson, who was diagnosed with the condition 3 years ago.

Mel said: "It was so nice to come to the clinic and meet a range of experts who knew about Jackson's condition and who understood his needs at this stage of his development.

"The whole team was amazing and really accommodating of Jackson's needs, as he also has autism and can find medical appointments challenging. It was great to meet all the different team members who were so helpful, especially having that psychological support."

She added: "We've previously found there can be a lack of understanding and

little information known about Klinefelter syndrome so to come here has been really life-changing for our family."

The Klinefelter syndrome clinic is based at the Rare Diseases Centre in St Thomas' Hospital for patients across the UK.

Previously in 2019, Guy's and St Thomas' launched the world's first Klinefelter syndrome clinic for adults, and then expanded the service to teenagers and young men in 2021.

The dedicated clinics have also reduced the number of visits a patient will have to make, from an average of 6 appointments to a single visit for many patients.

Tet Yap, surgeon and lead for the Klinefelter syndrome clinic at Guy's and St Thomas, said: "We are delighted to be opening our clinic to children, making this a comprehensive service for all patients with Klinefelter syndrome, no matter their age.

"After we launched our teenager and adult clinics, it became clear that we needed a service specifically for children. Being able to support children with Klinefelter syndrome at a crucial point in their childhood can make a big difference, including with their education and development."

Kelly Cook meets two patients whose lives have been saved thanks to the generosity of their organ donors.



Gloria received life-saving care at Evelina London when she was only a few weeks old



Gloria's dad Sorin donated his kidney to her

The gift of life

Gloria's story

Gloria Sirbu is like any other toddler – energetic and full of fun. It's hard to believe that last year the 3-year-old needed a life-saving kidney transplant.

Gloria was born in 2021 with polycystic kidney disease, a genetic disorder that causes fluid-filled cysts to grow in the kidneys.

Her mum, Laura Seraficeanu, received the devastating diagnosis during an antenatal scan while on holiday in Romania. She was unable to travel back to the UK due to the risks of premature labour, and gave birth to Gloria at 36 weeks.

She was discharged from the hospital 3 weeks later and the family immediately flew home.

Laura, 31, said: "After landing at Stanstead Airport we went straight to Evelina London's specialist emergency department at St Thomas' Hospital as she

was very close to not surviving."

Gloria was incubated and given medication, before being taken to the paediatric intensive care unit at Evelina London, which is co-located with St Thomas'.

Gloria developed necrotizing enterocolitis, a serious condition that causes inflammation of the gut.

This meant she needed an ileostomy, an operation to bring the end of the small bowel to the outside of her tummy to form a stoma, which was reversed 3 months later.

Gloria had some kidney function until 6 months old but then had to start peritoneal dialysis at home, which she received over the next 18 months.

Laura said: "Everyone at Evelina London was so helpful and there was nothing more I could have asked for. They gave her the best care and brought her back to life."



Gloria and her mum attended the British Transplant Games. Each year, Evelina London Children's Charity supports a team of kidney transplant recipients and their families to attend

In May 2023, 2 days before Gloria's second birthday, her dad, Sorin Sirbu, donated a kidney to her.

Laura said: "It was the best present Gloria could have received. Sorin's surgery took place at Guy's Hospital and he recovered really well. Gloria stayed at Evelina London for 3 weeks and is now doing brilliantly."

Dr Nick Ware, a consultant children's kidney specialist who cared for Gloria, said: "Patients who don't have the option of a living donor are completely reliant on the generosity of deceased organ donors and their families.

"For these children, an organ is literally the gift of a new life and I would urge everyone to have a conversation with their loved ones to discuss whether they would like to give that gift, should the very worst happen."



Photo © Jannah Claire photography

Sonsare with his wife and son

Sonsare's story

In 2018 while climbing Pen Y Fan, the highest peak in South Wales, Sonsare Zabadi experienced such severe breathlessness and chest pain that he thought he was having a heart attack.

After seeing his GP and undergoing numerous tests over several months, Sonsare was diagnosed with interstitial lung disease – a term used for a large group of diseases that cause scarring of the lungs, which makes it difficult to breathe and get oxygen to the bloodstream.

By August 2022, at just 33 years old, Sonsare's condition had worsened and he was referred to his local palliative care team, and to Harefield Hospital's transplant clinic.

Sonsare, who has a son, said: "I was devastated mentally. Surely the end was coming and fast."

By August 2023, Sonsare met all the conditions required to get on the national

transplant list and received two life-changing calls from Harefield Hospital within 48 hours – a donor had been found for a double lung transplant.

He said: "This miracle has saved my life and given me the ability to watch my son grow up. I often wonder what my donor was like – words cannot express my deepest gratitude to her and her family."

Sonsare added: "Organ donation is a gift – one that doesn't discriminate, but one that is made even more impactful when people from all communities come together to give. The best matches for organs are typically found within the same ethnic group due to similarities in blood types and tissue markers.

"Let's talk about it, learn more, and make informed decisions that could transform someone's future – just like my donor did for me."



Sonsare in the recovery ward a few days after his double lung transplant

Fast Facts

- To register your decision to be an organ donor, visit www.organdonation.nhs.uk
- Between 2023 and 2024, **Guy's Hospital performed the most adult kidney transplants in the UK** with 279 completed
- **Harefield Hospital completed the most heart transplants and the second most lung transplants** in England over the same year, with 44 heart transplants, 28 lung transplants and one combined heart and lung transplant

Maxine Hoeksma discovers how eye tracking technology is helping 12-year-old Amy take control of her mobility.

Driving with confidence



Amy with her parents Neil and Sarah

Like so many children, Amy Morgan, who has cerebral palsy, loves shopping.

Now, thanks to eye-gaze technology, the 12-year-old is able to drive her power assisted wheelchair independently in shops, without the help of her mum and dad, using just her eyes.

Amy is the first child in the UK to use the eye-gaze system to drive a powered wheelchair.

The technology enables people who are unable to manoeuvre a standard wheelchair because of a physical disability.

She has found that the technology works best indoors where she is able to maintain more control and accuracy, and move around independently.

Amy is supported by Guy's and St Thomas' Assistive Communication Service at the Bowley Close Rehabilitation Centre in south London.

The service supplies, fits and trains

adults and children with complex communication problems to use a range of hi-tech communication aids and other devices.

The team have been supporting Amy to use eye tracking software to communicate with people since she was 6 years old. The software comes with a special camera to allow patients to use their eyes to move a mouse cursor on a tablet to form words and sentences that are turned into an electronic voice.

A technology company worked with the Assistive Communication Service, and provided the control system which connects an eye-gaze enabled tablet and an electric wheelchair to allow people to drive independently.

Amy's dad, Neil, said: "The key word is

independence. It's that ability for Amy to decide to do something for herself.

"Before Amy had to be pushed around by us or her support worker at school. Suddenly being able to drive with her eyes made her very happy."

"Before Amy had to be pushed around by us or her support worker at school. Suddenly being able to drive with her eyes made her very happy.

"There's a limited speed you can use but you've got much more accuracy, so it's quite good in the home or if you are in a tight space."

He added: "Amy likes going to the supermarket.

In the past it would be a real challenge because you have to be able to push Amy and a trolley. Now she can move herself around the supermarket in a safe way and enjoy that experience."

The Assistive Communication Service trained Amy, the therapists at her school



Amy using eye tracking technology in her wheelchair



Wendy Garnett, occupational therapist

and her parents to use the eye tracking software, and more recently have supported her to use the eye-gaze device to control the power-assisted chair.

Neil said: "Amy's occupational therapist, Wendy Garnett, has been just amazing. Because of her experience with eye-gaze, and the technical support network that's in the back of Bowley Close, they work really well with all the services to make things happen. Wendy's willingness to go above and beyond was really good for us."

He added: "It's so nice for Amy to have the choice about where she wants to go and what she wants to do. People are drawn to her because she has such a big smile. She loves people and she is very sociable, so now she can go up and

introduce herself."

Occupational therapist, Wendy

Garnett, said: "With the eye-gaze device you give people the independence to initiate movement on their own, without relying on their carer. This is great, especially for children like Amy, as it helps with their development.

"Children learn through touch, speech and play. To some extent

the eye-gaze device gives Amy the ability to keep up with her peers and the chance for social interaction, as she moves around the classroom. It's an important part of being a child.

"We want to give people as much autonomy and independence as we can, and to open up a world of possibilities."

"We want to give people as much autonomy and independence as we can, and to open up a world of possibilities."

Funding for the equipment and software that enables the eye-gaze communication aid to drive the powered wheelchair was provided by the London Borough of Bromley Education department.

The powered wheelchair was provided by Bromley Wheelchair and Specialist Seating Service.

Michael Carden

explains how the Trust's new values and strategy provide a blueprint for the years ahead.



Better, faster, fairer healthcare for all

Guy's and St Thomas' has launched new values and a 5 year strategy that describe the Trust's ambitious plans for the future.

The new strategy is called 'Better, faster, fairer healthcare for all' to recognise the scale of our ambition, as well as the need to respond to the challenges currently facing the NHS.

The strategy was developed with input from patients, service users and staff from across the Trust, as well as our governors and partners, to ensure it reflects what is most important to them.

Across our 5 hospitals, and in our community services in Lambeth and Southwark, we have exciting opportunities to improve the experience of our patients, improve the health of local communities and to harness the power of new technology.

Chief Strategy Officer, Jackie Parrott, says: "We know that nothing matters more to people than high-quality, reliable healthcare when they need it most. Our ambitious new strategy and shared values set out how we will deliver this for

everyone we serve."

Our new values: **caring, ambitious** and **inclusive**, will shape how we work and deliver our plans. They reflect our strong focus on making sure our services meet the needs of the communities and patients we care for, and will help to improve health and wellbeing locally.

As an inclusive organisation we want to make sure everyone feels welcome, listened to and that their needs are met. We are also committed to using technology, research and innovation to deliver the best possible care in ways that are better for patients and sustainable for the future.

You can find out more about the Trust's new strategy and values on its website at www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/about-us/our-strategy-and-values

Our strategy is focused on 5 key priorities:

Delivering healthcare excellence – by providing the very best care and experience to every patient

Improving the health of our populations – by helping people to live longer, healthier lives

Valuing all of our people – by providing flexible workplaces with fair opportunities for career growth

Innovating for a better future – by pioneering new treatments and technologies, helping to drive efficiency

Modernising our infrastructure – by investing in equipment and improvements to make us more sustainable

Caroline Watson finds out the best ways to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

Staying well this winter



Getting vaccinated can help you to be 'winter-ready'

The arrival of colder weather can be a great opportunity to pull out the woolly sweaters and enjoy some cosy nights in – but it can also mean winter coughs and sneezes are just around the corner for many of us.

Flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory infections and viruses can be miserable for people of any age. However, these illnesses can become more dangerous for elderly people, very young children and anyone who is vulnerable due to other health conditions.

Complications from winter illnesses, such as chest infections and breathing difficulties can also put extra pressure on NHS emergency departments and urgent care centres.

Tim Yorston, consultant nurse in urgent and emergency care at St Thomas' Hospital, said: "We do see real peaks in people attending A&E, usually a couple of weeks after a cold snap, and it's these spikes in demand that cause us problems."

While some patients who are seriously ill with respiratory infections might need to be treated at A&E or an urgent care centre, the vast majority are likely to be better off seeking health advice or medication from

a pharmacy or GP, or practising self-care at home.

Tim added: "I'd encourage people of all ages to get 'winter-ready', to ensure they can keep themselves, their family and friends healthy over the colder months. This includes prevention, such as encouraging older relatives and friends to get their free vaccinations against flu, COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus, known as RSV.

"During cold snaps, simple things like

checking in on an elderly relative or neighbour can also make a real difference. It's important to check they're staying warm, and if it's icy they might appreciate some help getting groceries so they don't risk slipping over outside."

Lifestyle choices such as smoking, how much alcohol we drink and eating a balanced diet can also be big factors in how well our body is equipped to fight off winter illnesses.

Tim said: "The best healthcare advice is always to stop smoking. There's lots of support available for people who want to break the habit, and this will help strengthen their defences against winter bugs and chest infections."

"I'd encourage people of all ages to get 'winter-ready', to ensure they can keep themselves, their family and friends healthy over the colder months."

Top tips for winter wellness

- **Get vaccinated** – eligible people – such as the elderly, very young children, and those who are clinically vulnerable – should consider getting immunised against flu, COVID-19 and RSV
- **Check in on elderly people** – ensure elderly relatives and neighbours are warm enough, and whether they need any extra help during cold snaps and icy conditions
- **Drink sensibly** – pace your alcoholic drinks at festive parties and look after your friends so everyone gets home safely
- **Stop smoking** – quitting smoking will better equip your respiratory system to fight off future infections
- **Get advice if you feel unwell** – help and advice is available from your pharmacy and your GP, or visit NHS 111 online if you have an urgent medical problem. In an emergency, go to A&E immediately or call 999

Alana Cullen

finds out how Guy's and St Thomas' is supporting the next generation of dental nurses to kickstart their career.

Nursing homegrown talent



Khamani Johnson and Chivaughn Thomas-Paul recently started the course

Guy's and St Thomas' has around 700 staff members on apprenticeship programmes – these are offered across the Trust and range from engineering to occupational therapists.

It is the only NHS trust in London to offer a dental nursing apprenticeship, providing a unique opportunity for aspiring dental nurses to earn a nationally recognised qualification alongside receiving on-the-job training, all whilst being paid.

The programme takes in 10 new people every 2 years.

During the 18-month course, apprentices learn key skills across

paediatric and adult dentistry care, working alongside qualified dental nurses with specialist knowledge and skills to support patients.

After completing the course, apprentices come away as level 3 registered dental nurses, and are offered available employment opportunities at the Trust.

Salamatu AbdulRahman recently qualified as a dental nurse after completing the apprenticeship.

Since her 3 children have grown up, Salamatu decided to move into the career she always wanted, with day-shifts that worked around her schedule.

Salamatu, who lives in north London,

said: "I am a practical learner so focused on looking for an apprenticeship rather than applying for a degree.

"I hadn't been in education for a while so at first I thought, can I even do it? But we practised in the clinic, and I had so much support. It was so interesting, and it pushed me every day."

Since qualifying, Salamatu is enjoying her new role. She said: "I love being there for my patients. Every time I help someone I feel happy in myself, and in the team's work."

Salamatu has also applied to be a clinical mentor, to support the next generation of apprentices.

She said: "My advice to future apprentices – be open minded when you start, and don't be discouraged. There is no question too silly, and there is always support to help you in the clinics."

"I love being there for my patients. Every time I help someone I feel happy in myself, and in the team's work."



Salamatu AbdulRahman qualified as a dental nurse after completing the apprenticeship

40% of dental nursing apprentices go on to develop their career further, including going into senior nursing roles and becoming clinical nurse specialists.

Khamani Johnson, 20, and Chivaughn Thomas-Paul, 19, who started on the course in September, aspire to become dental hygiene therapists after they qualify in 2026.

Khamani, who wants to work in paediatric dentistry, said: "I am really enjoying the course and the hands on learning."

Chivaughn added: "I am looking forward to going to the different places around the Trust and learning about all the specialties. I am also looking forward

to qualifying.

"The course is well planned and scheduled, which means I'm able to prepare for the months ahead. It also makes the experience of starting a new course less daunting."

Samantha Salaver, head of nursing for dental services, helped set up the apprenticeship 7 years ago.

She said: "It is fantastic to see how successful the dental

nursing apprenticeship programme has been, and how our students are thriving. The programme allows us to nurture homegrown talent and open up more doors to dental nursing."

"The programme allows us to nurture homegrown talent and open up more doors to dental nursing."

Fast Facts

- Guy's Hospital hosts the **largest dental school in Europe** and is ranked in the top five dental schools worldwide
- Guy's and St Thomas' **cares for more than 160,000 dental patients every year**
- The dental hospital has **261 dental chairs and 2 dental day case theatres**

Top tips for new apprentices

- Ask questions
- Try as many new things as you can
- Reach out and start a network
- Believe in yourself
- For more information on apprenticeships and tips, visit **www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/apprentice-tips**

Behind the scenes

George Ogleby, sustainability communications and engagement lead

Q What does your job involve?

A My job involves communicating and promoting the Trust's work to become more environmentally sustainable.

I raise awareness among staff and patients of the Trust's Sustainability Strategy. This is a 10-year plan to help address the climate crisis and improve local air quality. The strategy also aims to connect people to nature and make better use of our resources.

Q What are you working on?

A A recent project that I have found rewarding is our Gloves Off campaign. This highlights when it is appropriate for staff to wear non-sterile gloves.

The campaign is designed to decrease plastic waste, reduce the risk of infection

and save money. To spread the message, I have delivered presentations across the Trust and created educational posters.

I am proud that my work not only protects the environment but also improves patient care.

Q How does your work help patients and staff?

A The Trust's sustainability work helps patients and staff to live healthier lives.

Our Clean Air Plan is intended to improve the local air that we breathe. To achieve this, we are shifting to electric vehicles and reducing anaesthetic gases that cause pollution. We also give health professionals information that allows them to advise patients who live in the most polluted areas.

We offer incentives for staff to walk or cycle to work, and create new green spaces at our hospital sites.



Q What do you enjoy about your job?

A I enjoy the variety of my work. One day, I could be presenting to a packed lecture theatre full of staff. The next, I could be producing and editing an exciting new educational video for one of our campaigns.

It is a privilege to work with so many dedicated colleagues. They are passionate about protecting the planet and delivering the best possible care for our patients.

From the frontline

Matthew Starmer-Smith, interim lead radiographer at Royal Brompton Hospital

My job as lead radiographer involves managing staff and offering specialist imaging services to patients. These include X-ray, fluoroscopy (continuous X-ray) and CT scan services.

I help with image-guided, minimally invasive procedures to diagnose and treat heart and lung conditions.

I also put devices like PICC lines (peripherally inserted central catheters) into the veins of adult and child patients. This is a way to give medicines and fluids directly into the bloodstream.

It is rewarding to know that my job has a positive impact on a patient's experience.

I enjoy working with highly specialist teams using the latest medical equipment. For example, our department was the first in the country



to get the Ion robot by Intuitive. This robot-assisted technology helps us to treat or take tissue samples – known as biopsies – from tiny growths called

nodules in the lungs.

To put patients at ease, I explain imaging procedures in a simple, understandable way. For children, I describe accurately how the procedure feels but reassure them at the same time. Our play team can help to distract children having a procedure. I also speak with medical staff about ways to help manage any pain.

A radiographer needs to build a friendly working relationship with patients quickly and effectively.

Many imaging procedures take less than 30 minutes. This means you have a short time to explain, perform and follow-up on a procedure. Other important skills are attention to detail and a willingness to adapt to last-minute changes in the busy hospital environment.

St Thomas' Hospital is where modern cataract surgery was developed.

Alana Cullen explores the 75-year history behind the lens.

Saving people's sight across the world

There have been hundreds of medical breakthroughs over the last 75 years, from the first heart transplant to the development of the COVID-19 vaccine.

One innovation that happened on our doorstep is the development of modern cataract surgery. This medical breakthrough has saved the sight of more than 200 million people across the world.

On 29 November 1949, Sir Harold Ridley, an ophthalmologist at St Thomas' Hospital, undertook the first lens removal surgery for a patient with cataracts. This was followed by the first successful lens implant operation on 8 February 1950.

Sir Harold made his pioneering discovery after treating a Spitfire pilot who had Perspex in his eye following the Second World War.

He noticed that, unlike most foreign bodies, the eye did not reject Perspex. He used this discovery to create an artificial lens made of Perspex, called an intraocular lens, to replace the lens in patients' eyes.

There are reports of cataract surgery dating back to 1000 BC to remove the cloudy lens. However, up to 1950 there was no replacement for the lens, and patients needed to wear powerful thick glasses instead.

At the time Sir Harold's invention



(above) St Thomas' current cataract clinical team
(left) Sir Harold Ridley



was considered a radical concept, which was initially resisted by much of the medical profession. There was a 3-month recovery period between the removal of the cloudy lens and the implantation of the artificial one.

By the 1980s it had become a routine procedure but involved a small incision, stitches and a 2-week recovery.

Today, it is the most common eye operation in the world and takes only 15 to 30 minutes per eye. It requires a tiny incision of just 2mm, no stitches, and patients are discharged within 4 hours. Some patients may even have no need to wear glasses afterwards.

Dr Sancy Low, consultant ophthalmic surgeon at Guy's and St Thomas', said: "It is incredible to reflect on how many lives have been changed over the last 75 years thanks to Sir Harold Ridley's

pioneering work.

"At St Thomas', we continue his legacy and support patients from across the country, carrying out almost 3,000 operations a year. Our specialist unit treats complex patients needing cataract surgery that cannot be undertaken in independent treatment centres."

Following in Sir Harold's footsteps, St Thomas' is also the leading centre for cataract research in the UK.

"At St Thomas', we continue his legacy and support patients from across the country, and carry out almost 3,000 operations per year."

What are cataracts?

Cataracts are when the lens, a small transparent disc inside your eye, develops cloudy patches. Over time these patches usually become bigger, causing blurry vision and eventually blindness. Common causes include ageing, diabetes, steroid use, trauma and inflammation of the eye.

Meet the governor

Newly elected governor **Dominic Shaw** explains how he plans to use his experience to give a voice to young people.

Governors play a key role in representing the views of our patients, public and staff members, ensuring the Trust's services meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Dominic Shaw stood for election earlier this year and is one of 10 public governors. He will be in the role for 3 years.

Dom, from Vauxhall, said: "I walk past St Thomas' Hospital on my way to work every day so I know the value that the Trust provides to the community.

"Guy's and St Thomas' has done a lot for my family, most recently for my dad who received cancer treatment, so I wanted to give something back."

Dom has a lot of experience holding senior leadership to account, both as a union representative and as a school governor. He is also a mental health first

aider, a regular blood donor and volunteered with St John Ambulance during the pandemic to support the vaccination effort.

He said: "As a governor I will push for youth and mental health services to grow. I also want to see an increase in the number of active members of the Trust, especially young members."

The public sector consultant added: "I am committed to increasing transparency of decision-making and increasing the community services that are delivered."

Dom is keen for more people to sign up and become a member of the Trust.

He said: "The NHS is one of Britain's greatest inventions and is something we're all proud of. We have a crucial role to ensure our local NHS trust functions as effectively as possible.



"Becoming a member is free, quick and easy, and can make a real difference to our community and to the services we all need."

The governors are your elected representatives and are keen to hear your views. If you have a question, comment or idea please email governors@gstt.nhs.uk or call **020 7188 7346**.

Meet the member

Edith Okparaocha describes what being a member means to her.

Guy's and St Thomas' members are made up of staff, patients, and the public.

Members can get involved by helping us to improve services and shape our future plans.

Edith Okparaocha has been a member of Guy's and St Thomas' since 2017. She has lived in Southwark for more than 30 years and has used the services of the Trust.

She said: "During my visits I have encountered and met dedicated staff who go about their duties in a caring, compassionate and professional manner. Being a member gives me the opportunity to support the work that they do."

She added: "I enjoy being able to give my opinions to help improve the services that Guy's and St Thomas' provides. It's important for the voices of different communities to be heard, and being a



member helps me to extend the reach of the Trust."

The responsibilities of a member can vary. Edith said: "I try to fit member activities around my routine. If something

interesting comes up that I feel I'm able to make an impact with, I get involved.

"For example, I've attended member meetings and Annual Public Meetings. I have also participated in the Patient-Led Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE), which involved working with others to offer feedback on the hospital environment."

She added: "I highly recommend to anyone looking to become a member to do so, as it is a worthwhile and rewarding experience."

To become a member, call **020 7188 7346**, email members@gstt.nhs.uk or visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Get involved and make a difference

Sign up and help us shape your services

We involve patients, their families, carers and Foundation Trust members in planning, designing, improving and monitoring the services and care that we provide.

How to sign up

Complete this form – <https://bit.ly/PPInvolvement> – to tell us what interests you. We will get in touch when there are opportunities to get involved.

Current opportunities for children’s services

Right now, we’re looking for patients and carers to join our Youth Forum and our Parent and Carer Forum. To find out more and to get involved, please email ELCSEngagement@gstt.nhs.uk

Other opportunities

You can also help us to improve our:

- heart and lung services
- cancer and surgery services
- local community health services

Events and activities

We involve people in different ways, such as workshops, interviews and advisory groups. Some events are held online and others face-to-face. We will adapt activities to help you take part wherever we can.

Find out more

If you have any questions, email getinvolved@gstt.nhs.uk or call 020 7188 6808.



We have a pair of adult tickets for **Thames Rockets Ultimate London Adventure**. To be in with a chance of winning, simply complete the wordsearch below.

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- Beanie
- Boots
- Coat
- Earmuffs
- Gloves
- Hoodie
- Jumper
- Mittens
- Parka
- Scarf
- Socks
- Sweater
- Thermals
- Vest
- Wellies

Name

Address

Telephone

Email

Send your entry by **17 February 2025** to the GiST competition, Communications Department, 4th floor, Staircase C, South Wing, St Thomas’ Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 7EH; or you can email gist@gstt.nhs.uk.

The winners will be selected at random and notified within seven days of the draw. The result will be final and we will not enter into any correspondence regarding the competition winners. The prize is non-transferable. Your name and details will be collected solely for the purposes of this competition and in order to be able to contact the winner and send them the prize. By entering this competition, you give your consent for us to use the data you provide in this way.

Thames Rockets T&Cs: The prize winner will be able to redeem the prize using the code provided online or over the phone. Prize is valid 12 months from the date of issue. There are no age restrictions- however children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult on board. Please note those with past or current back or neck conditions are strongly advised not to travel with us. Without exception, expectant mothers are not permitted on-board at any stage of their pregnancy.

Raise money for your hospitals and community services

For all the latest news about our amazing fundraisers and how you can support us

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**We support the dedicated NHS staff at
Guy's and St Thomas', and the exceptional care
they provide to patients and their families.**

Search Guy's & St Thomas' Charity to find out more.

Care never stands still. And neither do we.

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