Pennine Acute Trust supports new Dementia ‘forget-me-not’ scheme

A NEW scheme to help support people with dementia has been rolled out at The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and its staff are signing up to become Dementia Champions.

Staff who have direct contact with patients are receiving dementia awareness training to find out more about dementia and what it’s like to suffer from the condition. Staff are being taught how to spot the symptoms and, more importantly, how to provide support to those living with the condition whilst they are in hospital.

The Forget-Me-Not scheme is part of a wider drive by the Government and Department of Health to raise awareness of dementia and change the way that people think about it.

Led by the Alzheimer’s Society, the scheme aims to make everyday life better for those suffering with dementia by changing the way that people think, talk and act. It also aims to get as many people as possible to register as Dementia Champions. The Government is hoping that 1 million people will register on the scheme by 2015.

Dementia champions are awarded a forget-me-not badge, to show that they know about dementia. The same forget-me-not symbol will also be used to recognise organisations and communities that are dementia friendly.

Every year dementia affects over 700,000 people and less than half of those are ever officially diagnosed. The condition not only affects people greatly on a personal level, but also has a considerable effect on the UK economy, with an estimated cost of £23bn a year. The scale of the problem can no longer be ignored and the government is spending over £2.4m to help raise awareness of the condition throughout the country.

The Pennine Acute Trust runs North Manchester General Hospital, The Royal Oldham Hospital, Rochdale Infirmary and Fairfield General Hospital in Bury.

Adele Doherty, Clinical Manager at Fairfield General Hospital, explains: “Dementia can be a disorientating and isolating condition and patients can often feel lonely, confused and cut off. The Pennine Acute Trust’s dementia champions will be trained to spot the symptoms as staff have a really important role to play and can help us provide the best quality of care and support to our patients.”
Healthcare assistant Wendy Rowley who works on ward 7 at Fairfield General Hospital was just one member of staff who signed up to be a dementia champion. She said:

"I think it is really important to promote this scheme as I want to try and help patients and their families on the ward where I can. I have previously worked in a nursing home, so I have experience dealing with elderly patients, many of whom have suffered with dementia. I have cared for patients at various stages of the disease and it can be really challenging for them. We have to do all we can to help support them. The Forget-me-not scheme is a good thing as it helps to promote awareness and improve the help given to patients and their families. If staff are aware of the signs of dementia, it will make it easier to help patients."

A special staff training video highlighting the essential knowledge and skills required to respond to patients with dementia has also been produced by the Trust. Starring members of the Trust’s education and training department, the video is available for all members of staff to view.

**Pictured: Left to right:** Claire Warhurst, older peoples RAID team; Adele Doherty, clinical manager and matron; John Saxby, chief executive of The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust; Carol Waterhouse, lead for clinical and professional development; John Jesky, chairman at the Trust and Jo Williams, curriculum development co-ordinator.

Also pictured: a screenshot from the Trust’s awareness training video.