**Friends of Brighton & Hove Hospitals to fund a Sarcoma Nurse Specialist – but what is a specialist nurse? What is Sarcoma?**

***An update from John Austin, Trustee***

Over the past few years there has been a growing recognition of the important role that nurse specialists can play, in healthcare co-ordination and support, especially for patients who face life-threatening or long-term life-changing illnesses.

Clinical Nurse Specialists will frequently be seen working in many areas and with specific disease groups such as diabetes, epilepsy, cancer, Parkinson’s, rheumatology, multiple sclerosis etc. A Clinical Nurse Specialist is a fully qualified nurse who has undertaken advanced level training and is able to offer information, support and advice. The Department of Health’s own economic analysis shows that the costs of employing a CNS for cancer are more than offset by savings elsewhere. This data is backed up by evidence from Macmillan Cancer Support, Epilepsy Action, Parkinson’s U.K., the Royal College of Nursing and case studies of patients with Multiple Sclerosis and chronic heart failure.

Savings come about by reducing unplanned hospital admissions and outpatient appointments and relieving pressure on GPs and Consultants, freeing them up to see new patients sooner. But most importantly the deployment of clinical nurse specialists results in improved patient outcomes.

A clinical nurse specialist can play a vital role in discussing treatment options to assist people to make informed decisions about their care, rehabilitation and in providing general advice and support to patients. This is of particular value for patients diagnosed with Sarcoma. Thankfully, sarcomas are rare – around 1% -2% of all cancers - and although there are good prospects of survival if treated early, they can be life-changing affecting functionality in many ways. Patients need specialist services which cannot be provided in all hospital settings.

Sarcomas are cancers which affect connective tissue and can be found in muscles, tendon, nerves, fibrous tissue, fat or bones. In Brighton & Hove about 20-30 new cases are diagnosed each year and most are referred to specialist treatment centres such as the Royal Marsden where treatment plans are agreed. But what patients need after diagnosis, before referral, as well as during and after treatment, is advice and support. Patients need to know all the options to help in making informed decisions.

That is where the specialist nurse comes in. I am pleased that the Friends of Brighton & Hove Hospitals, through donations and fundraising, have been able to finance the appointment, for two years, of a Sarcoma Nurse Specialist and Sarah Randall has recently taken up that post working with Oncology Consultant Dr Kate Lankester at the Royal Sussex.

I am very proud to be associated in a small way with the Friends who do so much to provide a better service and improve the well-being of patients.

***John Austin – June 2022***