



Pressure...King's College Hospital

EXCLUSIVE
By Giles Sheldrick
Chief Reporter

A SHATTERED Covid consultant has revealed staff are on their knees as he pleaded for help for his NHS hospital workers.

Dr Tom Best issued his SOS as he laid bare the devastating impact the pandemic was having on people treating the seriously sick.

Admissions at King's College Hospital in London have increased by 600 per cent in three weeks, he said, and there are more than 750 in-patients with the virus.

The crisis prompted Dr Best, who is the clinical director of critical care, to launch a Support Our Staff appeal for exhausted workers.

He said: "All those looking forward to spending the festive season at home were asked to cancel their annual leave and carry on working, with many taking redeployment to join the fight.

"Although these measures were extreme, there was no other choice.

"The rate of infections has spiralled, with many more patients extremely unwell. Once again, my colleagues and I are working incredibly long hours in pressurised circumstances as we go above and beyond to care for patients."

Critical

The appeal by King's College Hospital Charity has been set up to offer "immediate practical help" to frontline staff at the NHS trust, including food and toiletries, while "creating a safety net of support and wellbeing services".

As they are hit by a tidal wave of new cases the need for help is greater than ever.

The grim reality is replicated in almost every hospital across Britain, where staff are working back-to-back shifts and are in desperate need of basic essentials.

It has sparked appeals for items like sanitary and washing products, so key workers have some home comforts.

Dr Best said: "As we stand on the front line of the second surge, still exhausted from the first, we need your support more than ever."

The medic, who was awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours for services to critical care during the pandemic, said: "We have more patients now than we did at the peak of the pandemic last year. This is truly unprecedented. It has been called the worst situation the NHS has faced in living memory.

"We are at a critical point with combatting this virus. We need your support again to help keep staff going and able to provide the best possible care to our patients.

"In addition to improving patient experience, the physical and mental wellbeing of staff remains at the heart of King's College Hospital Charity's work.

"We must do everything we can to ensure our NHS staff are safe,

Doctor honoured by Queen issues desperate plea after hospital's Covid admissions rocket by 600%

We need YOUR help to keep exhausted staff going as they combat virus



On a mission...Dr Tom Best, seen during a shift, has launched an appeal

healthy and well." During the back-to-back shifts the exhausted workers are in desperate need of clean underwear, shower gel and toothpaste so they can at least freshen up at work.

The charity distributes food, toiletries including specialist hand cream and beauty products, shavers, phone chargers and PPE to

staff unable to return home as they are working around the clock.

There are also plans to create a series of so-called "wobble rooms" - non-clinical spaces where staff can take a brief break if needed.

Chief executive Gail Scott-Spicer said: "During the pandemic King's College Hospital Charity has been dedicated to supporting staff who

are providing outstanding care to patients in the most challenging of circumstances, as well as to patients and their loved ones as they deal with the impact of this disease.

"The care provided by staff throughout the hospitals is extraordinary as they consistently go above and beyond the call of duty.

"It is a privilege to be able to help them and to act as a means for our local communities to be able to express their support through their donations.

"We are able to translate this generosity into practical help whether that be through snacks, refreshments and toiletries to keep staff going through long, tough shifts or through funding bereavement counselling for patients and staff who have lost loved ones during these difficult times."

King's received its first Covid patient on March 3. Since then the impact on those working at the hospital has been profound, with the charity providing practical, emotional and psychological support to its "heroic NHS staff" as well as patients and their families.

Yesterday a study found almost half of staff working on intensive care units during the pandemic could be suffering from problem drinking, severe anxiety or post traumatic stress disorder. The

It's all about love and compassion

HERO healthcare worker Celestine Thomas-Frazer was training as a nurse when the pandemic hit Britain.

She was in her final year at university in Essex when the pandemic struck and she volunteered to finish her studies early to help the NHS.

Celestine, 54, now a fully-qualified nurse and working at King's College Hospital, London, said: "Love and compassion are what nursing is all about and we would never have come through the first wave of Covid-19 without those two things."

She added: "Like everyone else who was redeployed to

study surveyed 709 health workers from nine intensive care units in England in a study between June and July last year.

Of them, 291 (41 per cent) were doctors, 344 (49 per cent) were nurses and 74 (10 per cent) were other healthcare workers.

The anonymous poll found poor mental health was commonplace

work on Covid wards, I was anxious and fearful.



Caring...Celestine Thomas-Frazer

"But I knew I could make a difference to patients and nothing would have stopped me from joining the frontline."

among intensive care unit (ICU) staff and more prevalent in nurses than doctors.

A separate study using data from 4,000 patients treated in the first wave showed those admitted to full ICUs had a 19 per cent higher risk of dying compared to those in wards at moderate capacity.

Full means more than 85 per

cent capacity - the rate at which a medical emergency is declared.

The increase in risk was equivalent to being up to 11 years older.

Study author Harrison Wilde, of the University of Warwick, explained: "For example, if a 40-year-old person is admitted to a full hospital, they effectively have the increased health risk of a 51-year-old.

"Unfortunately the association between occupancy and mortality risk is much larger than we suspected and, with more people than ever being admitted, we need to act with more urgency."

Dr Yvonne Doyle, medical director at Public Health England, said: "With each passing day more and more people are tragically losing their lives to this terrible virus.

"Yesterday we reported the highest number of deaths [1,564] on a single day since the pandemic began.

"There have now been more deaths in the second wave than the first. About one in three people with Covid-19 don't show symptoms, but can still pass it on to others.

"It is essential we stay at home, minimise contact with other people and act as if we have the virus."

● To support the King's appeal visit www.supporttheking.org.uk/sos



Picture: LNP

Intense shifts...Covid nurse Anita Martin at King's

COMMENT

DR DALE GARDINER

Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine



We are doing everything possible to support ICUs

THE situation in intensive care units, particularly in London and the South-east, is deteriorating rapidly.

Many are as busy or busier than they were in the first virus wave.

In the majority of ICUs more than half of patients have Covid. They do not get better overnight - they take days, often weeks to recover.

This then reduces the ability to carry out other lifesaving care.

The majority of ICUs in the UK are exceeding their baseline bed occupancy and have expanded into makeshift areas of the hospital, or doubled up patients closer together.

The NHS has made plans for mutual aid, where we move patients from the most stretched intensive care units to ones with capacity.

Patients from the South-east have even been moved to Bristol. There are regular transfers of patients, in order to prevent any one intensive care unit being overwhelmed.

But ventilators or beds don't make patients better, staff do.

They are our greatest and most precious resource. One of the largest challenges we face is that intensive care has been doing this for 10 months now. Staff are exhausted, both physically and mentally.

The high number of patients combined with high staff sickness rates means ICUs are reliant on staff from other areas in the hospital to help out.

These additional staff are doing a tremendous job, but they are not fully intensive care trained.

So at this crucial time, we need everyone to do everything they can to reduce transmission - to keep themselves, their families and the whole of society safe.

The public should be reassured that we are doing everything possible to treat all those who might benefit from intensive care.

BATTLE SCARS OF A HARROWING SHIFT

By Giles Sheldrick
Chief Reporter

AN EXHAUSTED nurse posted a picture showing the gruelling effects of a back-breaking shift on an intensive care ward.

Hero Lauren Morrisroe had battled for 12 hours wearing full PPE before uploading the image and begging people to follow the rules "just so we can be with each other safely again".

The Northampton nurse said she reached "breaking point" after a distressed patient lashed out while being moved.

She said porters were not able to help move patients hooked up to breathing machines.

Ms Morrisroe added: "I got dressed in PPE while the porters closed off all the corridors."

The nurse had to wheel the patient through a corridor, into a lift, through another corridor and into another lift before another staff member in full PPE could help her.

She said: "Staff on the ward all had to move out of the way." Ms Morrisroe went on: "They woke up very confused and



Ordeal...Lauren Morrisroe

disoriented and began to swing punches and grab at me and the other nurse - not their fault as they had no clue what was happening."

After her ordeal Ms Morrisroe removed her PPE and checked her sore face: "This was what was staring back at me. This was my breaking point."

'Staff are our most precious resource'