

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

25 JANUARY 2011

**REGIONAL SPINAL UNIT AT
JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL – A BRIEFING**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To introduce senior representation from the Regional Spinal Unit at James Cook University Hospital, in attendance at the Panel to provide a briefing on the unit, for the benefit of the Health Scrutiny Panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the Panel notes the content of the briefing received at the meeting today.
3. That the Panel considers whether it would like to consider the topic in any further detail, or keep the matter under review.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT

4. The Panel has recently expressed an interest in considering the topic of back pain and specifically, how the local health and social care economy deals with back pain.
5. By way of background, NHS Choices¹ says that:

Back pain is a very common condition and can affect adults of all ages. It is estimated that one in five people will visit their GP in any given year because of back pain. And 80% of adults will experience at least one episode of back pain at some point in their life.

Chronic back pain is less common than acute back pain, but it is still very widespread. In England, chronic back pain is the second most common cause of long-term disability (after arthritis). After stress, it is the leading cause of long-term work-related absence. A recent study found that one in every 10 people reported having some degree of chronic back pain.

¹ <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

The rates of reported cases of back pain in England have doubled over the past 40 years – a trend that is seen in almost all Western nations. There are a number of theories to explain the rise in the number of cases.

6. Given its prevalence and impact upon the health of local communities, the Panel is keen to seek an understanding of how back pain is approached and managed in the local community. Further, the meeting also provides an opportunity for the Panel to receive a detailed briefing about the Specialist Regional Spinal Unit, housed at James Cook University Hospital, its recent history, the work it does, the area it provides services for and the challenges facing it in the future.
7. As such, the Panel will be able to hear from the Professor who leads the Unit, as well as clinical colleagues about the above issues.
8. The Panel is asked to note the content of the briefing it receives today and considers whether it would like to pursue the matter further, or keep the matter under a watching brief.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

9. Please see www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain/Pages/Introduction.aspx

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