

Neurosciences Intensive Care Unit (Neuro ICU)

Information for relatives



Welcome to the Neurosciences Intensive Care Unit (Neuro ICU) at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford.

As a relative of someone who has been admitted to Neuro ICU, we realise you are likely to be here after a sudden and unexpected event that has come as a shock to you and your family.

What is more, because we are a specialist unit covering a wide area, you may be far from home.

Most of the people admitted to Neuro ICU are here as a result of an accident which has caused a severe head injury, or as a result of a type of stroke, such as a subarachnoid haemorrhage.

We also look after people who have other conditions of the nervous system, or are recovering from major surgery (including neurosurgery, plastic and ENT surgery and trauma surgery), whether the operation is planned or urgent.

As part of the treatment we provide, it is likely that your loved one will be kept asleep with sedative and pain-killing drugs; this may mean that they cannot acknowledge you, or talk to you.

Whatever the cause of your relative's admission to Neuro ICU, we will do our best to help you through what can be a traumatic time, and to ensure that you are informed of your relative's progress.

If English is not your first language, we can arrange for an interpreter.



Neuro ICU staff

Your relative is being looked after by a large number of people each with different areas of expertise, who work together as a team.

You may have been welcomed to the unit by the receptionist or a member of the secretarial staff. They do not wear a uniform, but you can identify them by their name badge. They can help you with general questions, car parking permit applications and sick certificates. Do ask for advice – if necessary they can direct appropriate issues to the nursing and medical staff.

Each patient in Neuro ICU has an individual nurse looking after them (or one nurse for two high dependency patients), providing care constantly through the day and night.

Although the nurse changes with shifts, you will come to know the nurses looking after your relative very well, and they are the main point of contact between you and the other teams looking after your relative. The nurses are supported by a number of Clinical Support Workers and unit housekeepers, and the nursing staff are led by the Unit Manager.

There are different coloured uniforms you may see on the unit.

- Unit Manager – navy blue trimmed with white
- Sister / Charge Nurse – navy blue trimmed with white
- Teaching / Education Staff – navy blue trimmed with green
- Staff Nurse – royal blue
- Clinical Support Worker – pale blue trimmed with white
- Advanced Nurse Practitioner – navy blue trimmed with green
- Physiotherapist – white top, navy blue collar, navy trousers
- Radiographer – white top, maroon on collar, maroon trousers
- Occupational Therapist – white top, green on collar, navy trousers
- Housekeeper – white top, navy / black trousers

The Neuro ICU doctors are specialist anaesthetists. A Consultant Anaesthetist is responsible for the unit on a daily basis, supported by one or more junior doctors (specialist registrars). Neuro ICU anaesthetists coordinate the involvement of other teams, and are available to talk to relatives as often as necessary.

Your relative will also be under the care of a controlling specialist consultant, such as a neurosurgeon, neurologist, plastics or trauma surgeon; these are also represented by trainee specialist doctors. Although they are closely involved in patient care, their principal areas of work lie outside Neuro ICU, so you may not see them so often on the unit.

There are teams of advanced nurse practitioners, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, dietitians, speech therapists, microbiologists and radiographers who will be involved in your relative's care. We can also call upon a wide range of specialists from all the Oxford hospitals for advice whenever it is required.

Our daily routine

7.30am - 10.00am

Changeover of nursing shift
Morning ward rounds
Morning washes
Physiotherapy

10.00am - 1.00pm

Visiting
Physiotherapy

1.00pm - 3.30pm

Rest period
Some investigations / treatments or procedures if required

3.30pm - 9.00pm

Visiting
Changeover of nursing shift

Throughout the day patients are reviewed by multidisciplinary team members and the unit medical team. They may also be taken for X-rays or scans, or to theatre.

Visiting

Visiting hours are 10.00am - 1.00pm and 3.30pm - 9.00pm.

These hours can be slightly flexible as we realise people may have to travel long distances.

There is an intercom at the main entrance – please be patient if the receptionist is not available. You may have to wait before coming into the unit, as the nurses may be busy caring for patients; this may also be for your own safety, as we sometimes take X-rays on the unit.



We have a relatives' room where you can rest and relax, as well as a family room and accessible toilets. These rooms have been furnished with donations from the families of previous patients. There is limited overnight accommodation for relatives for emergency use, one night at a time – please ask the staff for more details.

The waiting area is not very big, so we ask that no more than six people visit together. We ask that no more than two visitors are at the bedside at any one time. If there are more than six people visiting at the same time, they may wait in the spacious West Wing atrium, where there is a coffee bar. There are also restaurants, cafes and vending machines throughout the John Radcliffe Hospital.

Children may be able to visit, although we don't recommend young babies – please discuss this with the nursing staff. Small children must be supervised by an adult at all times. We have a special booklet for children over 8 years old, which may be helpful – please ask the staff for one.

Your relative will need quiet to rest and sleep, even if they are sedated, which is why there is a rest period. We ask you not to visit during the rest period, so that all our patients get some rest and time for procedures / treatments which cannot be done at other times.

What to expect when you visit

You may be shocked when you first visit your loved one in Neuro ICU.

You may see that they have injuries or surgical wounds. They may have a breathing tube in their mouth, connected to a breathing machine by the bed, and there may be a number of visible drips, drains, feeding tubes or monitors.

Patients in Neuro ICU may be a bit swollen, so that their face looks different, and they may not be able to respond to you, either due to sedative drugs, or to the condition that we are treating them for.

Where possible, we care for male and female patients separately in same-sex bays. Curtains and screens provide privacy when needed.

We do our best to ensure that our patients are comfortable and not in distress, but please do not hesitate to tell the nurse at the bedside if you think your relative is in pain.

We understand if you want to be with your relative as much as possible, however, the nature of intensive care means that there may be periods when you are unable to be by the bedside.

This may be in order to maintain patient confidentiality, especially during nurse handover time.

Infection control

When you enter and leave the unit please use the alcohol gel by the main door to help prevent cross infection. There are also hand wash basins close to each bedside.

Our patients are especially vulnerable to infections, so please do not visit if you have a cold or upset stomach. If you have had an upset stomach, please wait until you have been free of symptoms for 48 hours before visiting.

Unfortunately we are unable to allow real flowers in the unit.

Parking

Visitors to long-stay patients or relatives of patients in critical care may be entitled to discounted or free parking. Please ask the staff for more information or visit

www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/transport-costs/parking-concessions.aspx

Telephone numbers

The telephone numbers for the unit are:

01865 234 918 or 01865 231 417

We can only give out minimal information over the telephone to protect patient confidentiality: for this reason, a password will occasionally be set up.

If you would like more detailed information, it is best to speak to a family member who has visited the unit more recently. It can be very helpful to designate one family member who can telephone the unit for updates and then share this information with others.

Please **turn off all mobile telephones** while you are on the unit itself, as they can interfere with our equipment, and the ring tones disturb other patients and families.

You may not take photographs, video or sound recording of any kind while on the unit.

How you can help

While we do have to respect patient confidentiality, and this may limit the information we are able to give you, we welcome your involvement in many aspects of your relative's care.

The nurses will help you if you wish to be involved in this way. If your relative has a disability or learning difficulty, please tell us about any particular likes or dislikes they may have, through the use of a 'Patient Passport' or 'Knowing Me' document.

Your relative might like to have their own familiar toiletries, and if they are getting up and moving around on the unit, they will need suitable clothing and footwear.

For safety reasons, do not disturb nurses while they are preparing and giving drugs to your relative.

Information leaflets

We have information in the waiting area on conditions, procedures and the equipment we use. Leaflets are free of charge and are also available on our website:

www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

Advanced Nurse Practitioners and support groups

Our Head Injury Advanced Nurse Practitioner offers support, information and advice to patients admitted with a head injury and their families. There is also a Subarachnoid Haemorrhage (SAH) Patient Support Group which meets regularly. Further information can be found in the waiting area. Please do ask a member of staff if you would like to find out more.

Transfer from intensive care

When your relative no longer requires intensive or high dependency care, we will transfer them to our ward in the West Wing. They will be under the direct care of the ward nursing staff, and the same neurosurgical, neurology or specialist surgery doctors.

Some patients may be transferred to the Neuroscience High Care Unit, a seven-bed unit within the Neuroscience Ward, providing higher levels of nursing care and monitoring than is normally available on the ward. Patients admitted to the High Care Unit benefit from closer observation and nursing support to enable a safe transition from the initial care environment to the ward setting.

Patients transferred to the ward no longer require the same level of care, and consequently the nurse to patient ratio is lower.

Patients who have come to us from a hospital outside the Oxford University Hospitals may be transferred back to their referring District General Hospital. We aim to keep you fully informed about plans regarding transfer.

We do our best to transfer patients between **9.00am** and **5.00pm**. Very occasionally a patient may be transferred outside of these hours.

Comments, suggestions and complaints

We welcome your comments on the care and treatment your relative receives from us.

We realise that things do not always go as we would like, so please do tell the nurse looking after your relative, the nurse coordinator, unit manager or a sister about any concerns. In this way any problems can be investigated straight away. If you would prefer to talk or write later, your comments and suggestions will be studied with care.

You can ask for our feedback questionnaire, or collect one from reception. You can also email feedback@ouh.nhs.uk or, if you feel you need to make a formal complaint, please email complaints@ouh.nhs.uk

Full details on the options for giving us your feedback are on our website:

www.ouh.nhs.uk/contact

For more information please visit www.ouh.nhs.uk or pick up a copy of the green booklet 'Information for patients – John Radcliffe Hospital' from the NICU relatives' waiting room, West Wing reception or volunteer Help Desk.

Contact details

Matron: 01865 234 103

Neuro ICU Unit Manager: 01865 234 598

Reception: 01865 234 075

Relatives' room telephone: 01865 231 392

Nurses' station: 01865 231 417 or 234 918

Neurosciences Intensive Care Unit (Neuro ICU)

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If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust

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www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

