

'Fly on the wall' study to look at surgery delays

A TEAM of Bristol researchers is aiming to find out why some people waiting for a hip or knee replacement have to wait longer than others for surgery.

The team at the MRC Research Collaboration at Bristol University will act as a "fly on the wall" during consultations between orthopaedic surgeons and patients, in order to gain a clearer picture of the factors that led to discrepancies in regional waiting lists.

The project has received funding of

£47,650 over two years from the Arthritis Research Campaign.

Its aim is to tighten up and standardise the guidelines governing the process of prioritising patients for surgery across the country.

Health services researcher Dr Rachael Goberman-Hill said: "From previous research we know that despite there being national guidelines for surgeons on who should be prioritised for joint replacement surgery, there are inequities in provision.

"We know that some people have to wait longer than others for surgery even if they are in the same amounts of pain and have the same problems with walking.

"What we don't know is what goes on in the decision-making process that perpetuates these inequities, and that's what we want to find out."

Among the factors that influence a surgeon's decision to operate are – the pain a person is in, the state of their hip or knee joint as identified in an X-ray and their level of obesity.

Starting in July, a trained researcher will sit in on out-patient consultations between four surgeons and 50 of their hip and knee replacement patients.

Provided the individuals give their permission, the discussions will be audio-recorded.

Patients will then be interviewed afterwards about the decision that was made and how they feel about it. Up to 20 patients will then be followed up after surgery to talk about their experience of surgery.

Technology helps budding author overcome her arthritis

Sky's the limit now my first book is in stores

A BRISTOL author who suffers from crippling arthritis used innovative voice-activated software on her computer to publish her first book.

Sky Benson had to retire from her job as a housing benefits officer at Bristol City Council after 17 years because she could no longer use her hands to work on the computer all day.

Nine months ago she had an idea for a book.

Using IBM ViaVoice voice recognition software, she was able to write it on her laptop.

Now she has had her first novel, *Why Was He Here?*, published through Authorhouse.

Sky, whose real name is Usha Jobanputra, lives in Bradley Stoke with her husband Rajnikant.

She has a grown up son, Vikesh, who lives in Bristol, and daughter, Neelam, who lives in London.

Usha said: "It was very difficult trying to do the book using voice-activated software.

"It's much easier to type but because of my hands I can't.

by Niamh Byrne
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"I've wanted to write since I was young.

"I began a book years ago but, because of family and job commitments, I didn't have the energy or the time to finish it and it went in the bin.

"I'm really pleased I've written this book. I still can't quite believe it and am still getting used to it being out there.

"Even my children were a bit shocked and said 'I can't believe you've finished it'.

"I have so many ideas now for new stories because I holiday quite a lot and get inspiration from all over the world.

"But I'm waiting to see what the reaction is to this novel before I do anything else."

The story is about a young woman named Jane who has everything going for her – intelligence, beauty and a loving family – but still feels out of place in her world.

260 negative – a failure rate of 15 per cent.

It rose from 10 per cent testing positive in the financial year 2005/06.

Prison service targets state the failure rate should have been kept below 10.3 per cent in 2006/7.

William Higham, head of policy at the Prison Reform Trust, said



Success:
Sky Benson

She meets a stranger and connects with him instantly, despite not knowing him, but within minutes he is gone.

Jane then embarks on a complicated and intense journey to find this man she knows nothing about.

The book's central theme is the importance of optimism.

Usha said: "It's a romantic book but not too slushy and it has got a bit of mystery and investigation for those people who enjoy some adventure and a bit of a twist.

"It's the kind of book holiday-

makers will like to take away with them because it's something to get your teeth into and keep you interested, but it isn't too heavy.

"Jane, the main character, is a bit of a square peg in a round hole and this chance encounter with a strange man ignites something in her and sets her on a journey that gets so intense and complicated she wishes she never started it.

"It's all resolved in the end though."

The book is available online at www.authorhouse.co.uk and at major bookshops.

15% of prisoners test positive for drugs in Bristol

THE drug culture in prisons continues to spiral with more than one in 10 inmates tested in Bristol proving positive, new figures have revealed.

A total of 303 prisoners were made to take tests for illegal substances at the city's jail in the 10 months to January this year.

Of those, 43 tested positive and

the latest figures proved drug taking was "endemic".

He said: "There is a cast-iron link between drugs and offending.

"We know that drugs cost around five or six times more [in prison] than they cost in the community.

"This high cost means people will find a way of getting them into prison. One of the best pro-

grammes I have seen is when prisoners work with the prisoners to get to the core of the addiction."

But the rate at Leyhill open prison, near Wotton-under-Edge, has halved, falling from 20 per cent to 10 per cent. Last year nationally, 197 heroin addicts were compensated a combined £750,000 for being forced to go cold-turkey in prison.

Residents of Bristol wanted for a short online survey (5 minutes)

'Noise Annoyance and Noise Sensitivity'

www.ifado.de/silence

The multilingual survey is conducted in the framework of the EU research project SILENCE. Aim is the improvement of noise abatement in built-up areas. After completion participants receive a feedback on his/her personal profile on noise sensitivity.

Responsible: Univ.-Prof.Dr. Barbara Griefahn

IN BRIEF

Pregnant shop worker robbed

YATE: A heavily pregnant shop assistant was thrown against a wall when a robber grabbed cash from the till of a newsagents.

Police have launched an appeal for help in catching the raider who entered the shop in Cranleigh Court Road at about 9.05pm last Saturday.

Wayne Baker, spokesman for Avon and Somerset police, said the man picked up a pint of milk and approached the counter.

Mr Baker said: "The female assistant, who is 26-weeks pregnant, opened the till and he reached over and grabbed a handful of cash.

"She confronted the robber and there was a struggle which ended when he threw her against the counter. She was not injured."

The raider, who had a goatee beard and was wearing a blue hooded top and beanie hat, then ran off. Anyone with information can call police on 0845 456 7000.

Police face sports test

CLIFTON: Police staff will take part in Bristol's biggest ever business challenge on Sunday at Clifton College.

Superteams 2007 will see the city's most powerful companies and organisations going head-to-head with international sports celebrities from the world of rugby, including ex-England players Rory Underwood and Paul Hull, in a test of fitness, courage and endurance.

Ten staff members including Assistant Chief Constable Rod Hansen, Inspector Kevan Rowlands and dog handler PC Mandy Gornicki-Bond based in Taunton, will participate in eight events involving a 100m sprint relay, 50m swimming relay race and football and cricket challenges.

Name and shame vandals

BRADLEY STOKE: Police are calling on Bradley Stoke residents to name and shame vandals who are targeting the redevelopment of a community building.

Officers say the modernisation of the community centre is being hampered by a series of criminal damage incidents. In the latest case a deliberate fire was started under the cricket veranda.

Police are appealing for local residents to be particularly vigilant after dark and to report any suspicious activity to police by contacting Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

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Institute for Occupational Physiology at Dortmund University, Ardeystrae 67, D-44139 Dortmund, Germany



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