

Issue 15  
October 2020



# MKUH HCA Newsletter

Welcome to the October Edition.

The autumn is truly upon us now with the weather becoming much cooler and the wind being a little harsher.

We must all be aware that this may be a challenging season for us with a possible second wave of Covid-19 and the usual admissions for Flu that we expect. Please look after yourselves and your health and well-being and make sure you are aware of the resources available here at the MKUH if you should need them: <https://intranet.mkuh.nhs.uk/teammkuh-support>

If you haven't already read the CEO update then please read below.

## Chief Executive's Update

It has been a week of news around increasing covid-19 cases and further restrictions to help stem the rise in Infections. I think it's difficult to take in the potential for a further six months of restrictions and the potential harm caused by this virus without feeling worried or scared and possibly frustrated or angry. We know what this pandemic has taken in lives and in the extraordinary efforts and sacrifice required to bring and keep it under control. It will take more from us over the coming months. I think we should acknowledge that we are all feeling anxious about what the next few months will bring. And when we feel anxious and not in control of aspects of our lives, we feel vulnerable. We are going to need to be kind and generous to each other. It's going to be a hard few months. There's no point pretending otherwise. Winter in the NHS is tough and demands a huge amount from us in normal years, and this is not a normal year. I say this not to drive home a depressing message, but because in recognising it, we can work to safeguard the physical and mental health of everyone working here. Recognising that we are all human, that we all have our fears and worries, and that we can only give so much before what is taken from us becomes unbearable, is a vital part of how we look after ourselves and each other.

Staying well informed is important and can be challenging when a lot of information is released quickly. We are working on getting an information pack together, consolidating both key Government advice and information and MKUH-specific information about working and using the hospital safely. We also hope to be able to share some more information about the new test and trace app – which was released this week and is available to download from app stores. And as always, I would encourage you to please raise any questions or concerns you have through the usual routes.

Finally, can I please remind everyone about the importance of wearing masks in non-Covid secure areas – including wards, corridors, clinics, waiting rooms (and so on). I have had concerns expressed to me from members of staff about their colleagues not adhering to the requirement – and it is a requirement – to wear a mask in non-Covid-secure areas. If you are in any doubt about whether you should wear a mask in any part of the hospital, wear one.

**Joe Harrison**

## New MKUH HCAs

As Induction has changed I do not receive a list of new HCA starters at the moment so if you are a new HCA reading this



### Monthly Message from the HCA Trainer

Unfortunately due to unforeseen circumstances we were unable to start the HCA skills week this week, but we are hopeful we can have it up and running by November.

The first support workers council meeting is tomorrow and I will bring any information for HCAs from that and put it in the newsletter for November.

#### Thinking back to being a HCA myself and after discussion with Healthcare Assistants (HCA) about how they feel about their role the perception appears to be that:

- ◆ Healthcare Assistants are at the bottom of the ladder in status
- ◆ Healthcare Assistants are the least trained but most hands-on NHS staff
- ◆ Being a HCA can be very physically and emotionally demanding, but rewarding too.
- ◆ A HCA walks on average six miles a day on the ward.
- ◆ Healthcare Assistants have the least opportunity for education and development.
- ◆ Many Healthcare Assistants don't know that education is for them too; or how to go about accessing it.
- ◆ The language of healthcare is very academic and the vast majority of Healthcare Assistants haven't, for whatever reason, achieved academically in their lives. And yet there are thousands of healthcare assistants with all kinds of skills, experience and insights from other jobs – the health service should find ways to channel that resource.
- ◆ Every Healthcare Assistant should have a mentor, to encourage, persuade and help create independent thinkers and have access to forums where they feel comfortable to have their say and discuss issues.
- ◆ When entering an educational establishment and you are doing a course alongside nurses and other multi-disciplinary teams there is still a fleeting moment when that humiliating, dispiriting feeling that you don't belong returns.

Here at MKUH we are beginning to change this perception with the HCA forum, this newsletter, the introduction of the HCA skills week, standards and code of conduct. In the future, a creation of pathways to follow education into the Nursing Associate role, Assistant Practitioners role and other Multi-disciplinary roles will be created.

We are also looking at education for those that want to stay as a HCA but would like to further their knowledge and understanding of their role and the specialities associated to their ward or department.

We are also keen to show the value of those that want to stay as a HCA by providing education and practical assessments to prepare them for a band 3 HCA role.

Please contact me with your thought on training that you would like to see for HCAs at MKUH at [Sharon.mitchel@mkuh.nhs.uk](mailto:Sharon.mitchel@mkuh.nhs.uk)

## Going on an overseas holiday in the midst of a pandemic.

Having had a holiday booked since last year to Greece visiting the islands of Skiathos, Skopelos and then Athens it was with trepidation I waited to see if these islands would go on the quarantine list and we would not be able to go.

They didn't so we set off for our holiday.

Our first encounter began at the airport, a totally different experience to our previous one in February. We had to wear surgical masks at all times and show a QR code that we had to download from the GOV.UK website 24 hours before. Hand sanitiser was offered at every point we went through. We had to wear surgical masks during the flight and on into the Greek airport. We had to again show our QR codes and have our temperature taken before we were allowed through customs.

Outside the airport in Skiathos we had to continue to wear our mask in the taxi to the hotel and in the foyer of the hotel right up until we stepped inside our room.

Venturing out to a restaurant there were very few tourists about. The restaurant we chose only had one other couple in it.

The following morning we boarded a boat to Skopelos, again we had to wear masks and have a Greek government QR barcode ready to be scanned. It was mandatory to wear the mask for the whole boat journey whether you were inside or out on deck. There were very few travellers on the boat.



Arriving in Skopelos we wore our masks while sorting our hire car and then finally could discard them when we drove to our apartment. The owner of the apartment had left the key in the door and spoke to us via zoom to explain anything we needed to know. Unusually on a complex of 20 apartments only three were being used.

From this moment we felt our holiday had started. Skopelos (famous for the 'Mamma Mia' film) is a beautiful island very green and lush and the people we came into contact with were lovely and very kind to us. You were not asked to wear a mask in the restaurant or cafes but the staff all had masks and visors on at all times and there was hand sanitiser on every table. You were expected to wear masks in shops and there are no exemptions in Greece, if you do not wear the mask you do not enter the shop. The island was very quiet and had very few tourists. The locals that we spoke to all said it had been a very terrible year for their business as they rely on tourists like us. I felt completely safe there and felt we did not put the locals at any risk with us being there.



We made the same boat trip back to Skiathos to then get a plane to Athens and the procedures were the same. On arrival in Athens masks were mandatory everywhere inside and outside the airport, taxis, shops and some outside areas. We had planned to spend a day in Athens but with the covid-19 figures rising in Athens we decided against this and spent our remaining time at our apartment complex until our flight home.

The flight home was a little worrying as some passengers took off their masks during the flight even though they were constantly asked to replace them by the air steward. Arrival at Luton was uneventful although we were surprisingly not asked to show our returning QR codes this was the first time we had not had to show them while using transport.

Interestingly Skopelos has had no confirmed cases of covid-19. Skiathos only 19 suspected cases from March - June and none since.



Written by Sharon Mitchel

## Upcoming Events

HCA Drop in Session	Tuesday 13 October	Wd18 2pm	Wd19 2.30pm	Wd20 3pm
HCA Drop in Session	Wednesday 21 October	Wd7 2pm	Wd21 2.30pm	Wd22 3pm
HCA Drop in Session	Friday 30 October	Wd23 2pm		



The Milton Keynes RCN Branch are having their AGM on the 8th October on teams and are inviting members and non-members to attend. If you would like the link to join please go to [RCN.org.uk](http://RCN.org.uk).

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

If you have a question, it will be answered in this section. Just email your question to Sharon between the 2nd and the 25th of each month to: [sharon.mitchel@mkhuh.nhs.uk](mailto:sharon.mitchel@mkhuh.nhs.uk)



### THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

Please remember you can email comments, questions, suggestions and articles to [sharon.mitchel@mkhuh.nhs.uk](mailto:sharon.mitchel@mkhuh.nhs.uk)

See you next month!

