

# Summary of shortlisted nominations: Excellence – Systems & Pathways Award

This award recognises excellence in the operational support, delivery or management of cancer services.

## 1. Caroline Williams, Interim Network Manager for Cancer, Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board

I would like to nominate Caroline Williams, who is the Interim Network Manager for Cancer in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and has been in this role for many years in its different forms.

Caroline is, as I'm sure would be agreeable across the patch, an inspirational person both in her role and as a person. No one has a negative word to say about Caroline and her work ethic, and she would be welcomed into any project or team.

Caroline works to include all levels of staff in any work that is taking place to improve cancer services for patients in North Wales, and inputs into the development of national work also.

Caroline has supported and implemented many projects, a few to mention include the one stop neck lump clinic, straight to test for different specialties for suspected cancer patients, nurse triage piloting, supported self-management in prostate cancer patients and so much more. Whilst doing the above, she has also ensured that the health board's cancer performance is monitored closely and that interventions are made where required. For a while, BCU had the best cancer performance in Wales for a consistent amount of time, and whilst she would not accept any credit for this, she absolutely had a large role in delivering and maintaining the same.

Caroline often inputs into national workstreams and is always working to obtain extra funding to support new and innovative projects and is always open to listening. She is incredibly supportive in the workplace to her vast team, but also to people outside of that team. She is incredibly patient, but honest when required and will fight for what she believes is right for the patients.

Managers often do not get recognised for their input into the delivery of cancer care, and I feel that her efforts should not be overlooked and should finally be recognised for the fantastic impact it has had.

## 2. Kirsty Morgan, Deputy Directorate Manager, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Kirsty Morgan is a simply outstanding member of the operations team. In her role as a Deputy Directorate Manager, she has led and personally delivered the biggest change in Breast Services our Health Board has seen. Her ability to work together with, lead and inspire clinicians, operational colleagues, the third sector, patients and their loved ones is truly unique.

She has transformed the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) breast service from one which had unacceptable waits for first outpatient appointments for urgent suspected cancer to one that is able to see and treat the majority of breast cancer patients within 62 days.

She has led the centralisation of breast services across the Health Board to the Snowdrop Breast Centre, using dedication, resilience, ambition and diplomacy where needed. This incredibly complex project was in addition to her 'day job', requiring huge input with minimal resource. She consistently used innovation, intelligence, and experience to navigate the many challenges faced along this very difficult journey and has achieved what many others before had been unable to. Throughout this, she has inspired her team to work together to achieve what seemed impossible at first. Her engagement with, understanding of, and support of, frontline clinicians is unique and is part of the reason that she has been able to achieve this remarkable feat.

Kirsty could see the benefit of appointing Wales' first ever Macmillan Metastatic Breast Cancer nurse and Wales' first full-time Breast Clinician, both vital roles in improving breast cancer care, and her vision, innovation and tenacity helped these roles to materialise.

Kirsty's hard work in the three key areas above has transformed patient care – significantly reduced waiting times and receiving care in a dedicated, purpose-designed unit that offers patients a calm, welcoming and dignified experience. She epitomises that managers and clinicians are not 'us vs them' but instead can work together to achieve amazing things.

Breast services are just one of the teams she manages, yet despite the huge challenges she faces, she has consistently gone above and beyond to provide innovative, intelligent, and caring healthcare. I cannot think of a more deserving winner of this award.

### 3. Sally Keenan, Pelvic Health Hub Coordinator, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board

Sally Keenan is the coordinator for the Pelvic Health Hub in Barry (part of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board). The Hub offers a range of services (colorectal, urology, urogynaecology, physiotherapy, specialist nurses and pain team) for patients with incontinence, prolapse and constipation and was setup in 2021.

She is passionate about improving the service and experience for patients with bowel issues, and this includes those patients with low anterior resection syndrome (LARS) after cancer treatments.

Sally always goes above and beyond for patients, providing them with a friendly face, a supportive shoulder to cry on as well as linking patients appointments and liaising with clinicians for those patients who are in trouble.

She has been part of three trials involving rectal cancer patients; LARRiS, POLARiS feasibility and POLARiS main study; signposting them to the trials, providing information and supporting the research team.

She has also set up a patient support group for patients with LARS, recognising that the other support group that she runs with [MASIC foundation](#), is potentially a barrier for men and women who have not had children, and who have bowel issues.

Sally is the beating heart of the Pelvic Health Hub and I feel that her commitment to improving our patients experience should be recognised.

#### 4. Kara Price, Transformation Programme Manager, Powys Teaching Health Board

I was inspired to nominate Kara for this award for her unwavering enthusiasm and passion for the Sponge capsule device implementation pilot and Transnasal Endoscopy (TNE) implementation pilot to succeed in Powys Teaching Health Board.

Kara is the driving force for both projects currently. She implemented a fortnightly mobilisation meeting bringing the key clinical and operational colleagues together to maintain momentum with an action log to clarify responsibilities. Both projects have faced multiple challenges on their journey to implementation, for example, the Cytosponge device was withdrawn from the market requiring re-engagement with procurement and governance teams to progress with the Endosign device as an alternative.

The TNE pilot has also overcome multiple hurdles including agreement of a nasal spray protocol (requiring identifying an alternative nasal spray due to contraindications relating to hypertension for the standard spray used for TNE and then obtaining approval from Medicines Management) and training challenges requiring additional honorary contracts and gaining support from an additional clinical team in a neighbouring trust.

Kara has liaised with the health board management chain to ensure Executive support to allow the projects to continue in the face of at times potentially insurmountable challenges. Kara has coordinated the team in finding solutions to successfully reach implementation of both projects.

The Capsule Sponge Device pilot has completed the clinics and Kara is coordinating colleagues for its evaluation. The TNE pilot has everything in place to commence clinics once the endoscopy nurse has completed her training and is confident to start clinics in PTHB with the support of Consultant Gastroenterologist, Hasan Haboubi. The first clinics are scheduled for June 2024.

I strongly believe that having management support for clinical teams with the desire to implement innovative diagnostics is crucial to maintaining momentum in the face of repeated challenges to enable successful outcomes. However, the operational teams work away in the background and often don't receive the recognition they deserve as projects succeed. I would really like Kara to receive the recognition she deserves as she is an outstanding member of our team, bringing clinical and operational colleagues together with a common goal.

## Summary of shortlisted nominations: Excellence – Non-Medical & Nursing Award

This award recognises excellence by a non-medical clinician, such as nurses and allied health professionals.

### 1. Rebecca Pope, Clinical Research Specialist Nurse, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Rebecca Pope is Wrexham's Lead co-ordinating nurse on the Moondance Cancer Initiative funded Enabling Research project. She has given her commitment over and above what is required to develop and enhance research across BCU, engaging with site link nurses, motivating and enhancing communication pathways between nursing and medical teams to highlight clinical trials.

Rebecca has received several accolades including a rare place on the International Association of Clinical Research Nurses Conference, held in Atlanta. This was an amazing achievement awarded by Health Care Research Wales.

The positive impact is transferring from a research inactive area of clinical importance in Gastrointestinal (GI) specialism, to an improved clinical team engagement, where Research is a priority and is discussed and highlighted at every multi-disciplinary team (MDT). There are now 11 GI trials active and recruiting from none two years ago.

Rebecca has developed excellent engagement with teams across the board and increased collaboration with sponsors and Principal Investigators in Wrexham Maelor Hospital and highlighted the research and development support available to assist increased confidence, and positive involvement in clinical trials, ensuring every possible opportunity for patients to be offered participation into a clinical trial.

Rebecca has immense drive and superb communication skills when engaging and troubleshooting with Departments to ensure seamless pathways for patient involvement in research. Rebecca's attention to detail and thorough work ethic is outstanding, and I am proud to have her as part of Wrexham Clinical Research Team.

## 2. Pat Rees, Lung Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist, Hywel Dda University Health Board

Pat, our lung cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), works as part of a multidisciplinary team that includes oncologists, surgeons, radiologists, pharmacists, and other health professionals. She provides expert advice, support, and education to patients, families, and staff throughout the cancer journey, from diagnosis to treatment to palliative care.

Pat has a variety of roles and responsibilities, depending on the setting and the needs of the patients. Some of the main duties she undertakes are:

- Assessing the physical, psychological, and social needs of our patients with lung cancer and developing individualised care plans.
- Coordinating and facilitating the delivery of care across different settings and services, such as primary care, hospital, hospice, and community.
- Providing information, education, and counselling to patients and families about lung cancer, its treatment, side effects, and symptom management.
- Acting as a liaison and advocate for patients and families, ensuring effective communication and collaboration among the health care team.
- Monitoring and evaluating the quality and outcomes of care and implementing evidence-based practice and quality improvement initiatives.
- Leading and participating in research, education, and policy development related to lung cancer care.

However, Pat is more than this, she is an advocate for our patients, supporting, empowering, and protecting the rights and interests of patients across Hywel Dda. Pat goes above and beyond her core duties:

- Helping patients understand their diagnosis, treatment options, and prognosis.
- Ensuring that patients have access to quality, safe, and affordable care.
- Respecting and honouring patients' preferences, values, and goals.
- Advocating for patients' rights and interests in local health policy.
- Supporting patients' emotional, spiritual, and social needs.
- Empowering patients to make informed decisions and participate in their own care.
- Providing feedback and suggestions to improve the health care system.

In addition, Pat was the driving force behind the LUMEN service which was designed to offer an accessible nurse-led assessment service providing direct access for patients with suspected lung cancer symptoms, and by eliminating geographical barriers, sought to provide equal access to all. LUMEN also sought to raise awareness of lung cancer symptoms and associated risk factors in the wider population by engaging people in community and hospital settings and encouraging them to seek timely medical attention.

Pat is one of the most caring and kind individuals I have ever worked with, and she deserves this award for her long-standing commitment to respiratory and cancer care in NHS Wales. I would strongly endorse her for this recognition.

### 3. Rebecca Griffiths, Acute Oncology CNS, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board

Acute Oncology is described by one of our team members as the wildebeest of the cancer workforce, comprised of all the ugly parts of cancer care. Diagnosis as an emergency presentation statistically means a later stage of disease. Complications and progression of disease signalling a change in disease and treatment trajectory; and treatment complications, at worst life-threatening, at best raising questions about whether treatment will be discontinued, often leaving already anxious patients in a state of uncertainty. Typically, these scenarios are played out in the emergency department, so as you can imagine improving patient experience is something of a challenge within Acute Oncology!

As a team we had attempted to rise to this challenge, developing patient experience questionnaires and piloting electronic Health Needs Assessment (eHNA), but quickly ran into a brick wall, the struggle was real as the kids say! Then, along came Becky.

Becky joined our team in 2022 and straight away picked up the baton of patient experience. Becky is the embodiment of patient centred care – occasionally to the detriment of her self-care (but we are working on that). She advocates fiercely for her patients and does whatever she can to ensure they get the best care and have the best experience possible whilst in hospital. If there is something that she can't get done she will find someone to do it for her before admitting defeat.

Having joined the team Becky developed questionnaires with the health board patient experience team and actively encouraged the patients to complete them. Alongside this Becky became the Acute Oncology Service eHNA champion, encouraging our patients diagnosed during an acute admission to complete the needs assessment to guide us to better support them.

What does Becky do that deserves recognition? Honestly, the hostile environment that she works in, not just the physical environment of a busy regional teaching hospital but the complex cohort of people that we meet and the time of their lives that we meet them, makes patient experience a near impossible task, one which Becky navigates with humour and positivity.

And the best bit... Becky is only two years into her Acute Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist career, with the projected retirement age now being 106 we have Becky's enthusiasm, tenacity, and humour for many years to come. In a time when the NHS can feel wobbly to say the least, knowing there are young people like Becky working amongst us can offer us all some of the comfort she strives to bring her patients every day.

#### 4. Clare Williams, Senior Colorectal Surgical Care Practitioner, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board

Clare Williams has worked in the General Surgery and Colorectal department at Cardiff and Vale Health Board for over 20 years. In her current role as Senior Colorectal Surgical Care Practitioner, Clare has developed the colorectal cancer service into a highly effective, well managed system. Thousands of patients diagnosed with colorectal cancer have benefited from her work to improve our cancer pathway.

Clare has played a pivotal role in establishing the Colorectal Surgical Care Practitioner role in Cardiff. For many years, she functioned as the only person in this post going above and beyond to ensure that we were offering a high-quality service. On a daily basis, Claire ensures that patients with colorectal cancer receive support, information and advice from time of diagnosis, throughout treatment and follow-up care.

Clare has been instrumental in setting-up a nurse led colorectal cancer pathway. This involves structuring our weekly Urgent Suspected Cancer clinics and managing bespoke multi-disciplinary teams for colon, rectal and peritoneal cancer. She has established a nurse-led colorectal cancer follow up clinic. This has become an extremely effective and valuable way of ensuring large volumes of patients get the surveillance and support they need following treatment for colorectal cancer. Clare is extremely dedicated to ensuring that each patient gets the investigations and treatment they need in a timely manner. She frequently highlights any concerning issues with patients in follow-up. Without this system there would undoubtedly be delays in patient care which would impact significantly on outcomes.

Clare and her team are a consistent point of contact for patients, families and other healthcare professionals involved in a colorectal cancer patient journey. Without Clare, we wouldn't be able to offer the quality of care to our patients with cancer. I can't think of anyone else who deserves this recognition more.



## 5. Jill Williams, Research Nurse, Hywel Dda University Health Board

It is with immense pride and admiration that I submit this nomination for Jill - an exceptional, dedicated clinical research nurse.

Jill has made an outstanding contribution to colorectal cancer research and has exceeded expectations to achieve amazing results. Over the past two years she has single-handedly recruited more than 250 patients into colorectal clinical trials.

Working within the Glangwili Hospital research delivery team, Jill was tasked with engaging with the endoscopy unit to recruit participants at the start of their colorectal diagnostic/treatment journey. This was a speciality area that previously the research team had had little involvement, so understandably the unit staff were anxious to ensure that involvement in research would not negatively impact the already highly pressured endoscopy service. At the beginning of setting up the first colorectal study, considerable amounts of reassurance and support was required. This is where Jill excelled; where others could have easily become disheartened and withdrawn from the challenge, Jill forged on. By means of her infectious enthusiasm, collaborative spirit, cheerful manner and research expertise, Jill was able to engage the whole endoscopy unit, bringing them from research naive to being one of the top recruiting endoscopy units in the UK.

Embodying the spirit of collaboration, compassion, and innovation, her achievements have been astounding. Her bedside manner is second-to-none - when approaching potential participants her empathy, understanding and deep appreciation for the fear and challenges facing each person attending the unit, are evident for all to see. She always goes above and beyond to address patients' concerns, alleviate their fears, and ensure that they feel valued, heard, and supported every step of the way. These invaluable qualities clearly enabled Jill to bridge the gap between research and patient care, demystifying research participation and ensuring wider participation in colorectal research studies.

Jill's journey in colorectal cancer research is not merely a story of numbers, but a testament to the profound impact that one individual can make with a heart full of compassion and a relentless drive to make a difference. Her remarkable accomplishments serve as a shining example of the transformative power of collaboration, compassion, and dedication in the fight against cancer.

## 6. Rachel Lewis, Allied Health Professional Lead, Hywel Dda University Health Board

As a cancer therapy team, we would like to nominate Rachel Lewis (AHP Lead) within Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDUHB) for the Excellence – Non-Medical and Nursing Award. She is an excellent manager, a huge asset to the cancer Prehabilitation through to rehabilitation teams and is so deserving of this recognition and award.

She currently line manages the HDUHB cancer Prehabilitation and rehabilitation teams and has fought tirelessly for years for the establishment of these services for all patients within HDUHB.

Her passion and determination are highly admirable with the successful establishment of these teams in 2022. Rachel is constantly working behind the scenes to push and drive the cancer prehabilitation to rehabilitation agenda to improve patient outcomes and to improve outcomes nationally. She believes in leadership at all levels, and actively encourages all staff to make recommendations, supporting change and values patient feedback, and strives at improving services. This determination and vision to improve services for all is truly inspiring and drives all staff to want to improve and constantly adapt the services to meet patient's needs.

The cancer Prehabilitation to Rehabilitation team offers assessment and interventions via a digital platform and the team have been able to reach out to patients right across the HDUHB footprint. Rachel has been a fundamental driver in understanding/ working with the teams in deploying new technologies, in improving service quality and delivering service changes for cancer patients post COVID pandemic within HDUHB. These changes have allowed more patients to access our service and have significant benefits for health care providers in the coming decades.

Rachel also is happy to support others in the health board by providing her high level of expertise within cancer services to fellow scholarship programmes. She also actively encourages and supports staff with ideas to pursue e.g. therapists being involved in Bevan Exemplar project- scoping cancer Prehabilitation to Rehabilitation within GP practices, therapists having the opportunity to present internationally in Belgium. Rachel demonstrates a commitment to staff learning and development and is modest in taking any recognition away from her teams' achievements.

Good management underpins the success of many high performing teams, Rachel's trust to encourage the therapists within the team to provide high-quality services and to maximise the impact of resources in the face of growing demand for care. This is demonstrated by a recent prostate cancer project and the patient stories, experiences and positive outcomes that are being showcased in the Senedd in Cardiff in June 2024.

Health Optimisation / Prehabilitation and Assessing and meeting people's needs are key priorities of Welsh Government 'A Cancer Improvement Plan', and Rachel has a pivotal role in advocating the ongoing positive changes and challenges met by HDUHB cancer patients with 96% of patients felt during treatments individuals physical, nutritional & psychological needs were met. Rachel is also a member of many national group e.g. the Welsh Cancer Network group which again is pivotal in moving our services forward for cancer patients.

With Rachel's determination and leadership, the team have accomplished the following:

- Increase in patients accessing prehab and rehab services rather than accessing other services prior to, during or following cancer treatment – Nurses, Consultants, GP, core AHP services.
- Reduced follow-ups in GP surgeries, acute services due to lack of self-management of symptoms & health optimisation.
- Decreased demand on primary & secondary care [unplanned care] services through poor management of health & condition specific symptoms.
- Improved patient experience.

My understanding is that this award recognises an individual's excellence within services, I can't think of a more inspiring person to achieve this award. Rachel's leadership and role model is one that we truly aspire to, and the patients of HDUHB within cancer services are very lucky to have her drive and passion and commitment to drive services forward for all.

# Summary of shortlisted nominations: Excellence – Medical Award

This award recognises excellence by a junior or senior doctor, or other doctor working in acute or community health services.

## 1. Dr Ricky Frazer, Consultant Medical Oncologist, Velindre Cancer Centre

Ricky has led on a number of projects for Velindre Cancer Centre since becoming a consultant in 2019. He is clinical lead for the assessment unit and in this role he provides clinical leadership for the Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) and wider clinical team. This involves planning each of their training programs, exams and running weekly teaching sessions at 8am on a Tuesday. He has led the business case and subsequent establishment of the immunotherapy toxicity service which recently won the UK National Macmillan Excellent Award in Glasgow in November 2023.

He leads the Velindre Work Experience scheme which was reintroduced in 2023. He took the role of Infection Prevention Control lead at the start of the pandemic and during Covid-19 worked in three surge hospitals outside of Velindre in his weekends and evenings whilst continuing to work at VCC. He also has a number of formal and informal educational leadership roles which include Faculty lead, Royal College Tutor, working experience.

Ricky also writes the curriculum for and delivers a leadership course for final year registrars and new consultants, teaching skills on a few leadership aspects including stakeholder mapping, writing business cases and managing change. This was based on his Masters in Medical Education that looked at the challenges facing new consultants in the first 5 years. Ricky has also completed a postgraduate certificate in leadership and used these skills to help grow Leaders of the future.

The assessment unit at Velindre has become an award-winning facility which places holistic multidisciplinary care at the heart of patient care for Southeast Wales. Ricky has already integrated and embedded the culture at the Immunotherapy Toxicity Service. Ricky as deputy lead of the Wales Cancer Network immunotherapy Group is leading on the development of All-Wales Immunotherapy Toxicity Guidance to ensure consistent management of toxicity not just in Southeast Wales but across the whole country. At a UK wide level Ricky is deputy president of the immuno-oncology clinical network (IOCN) which is a not profit national Charity that coordinates immunotherapy care across the UK.

Appreciating that optimal toxicity management is not just an issue for VCC, he set up with another consultant In Bristol the National Immuno-oncology education form which is a community of more than 500 health professional across the UK that hold a monthly meeting every first Thursday of the month. This is led and chaired by Ricky and he also manages all the admin including creating the agenda, finding speakers, recording the meeting. It is attended by more than 100 healthcare professionals from varied professional groups each month. This meeting is the first and only of its kind across the whole of the UK.

Ricky leads with compassion both for patient, staff and fellow colleagues. In preparation for the recent speciality training recruitment Ricky provided 1-2-1 interview practice to trainee doctors over weekends and evenings. In the recent recruitment, eight local trainees were successful in receiving a training number securing consultants of the future for VCC. As testament from Ricky personal patient feedback and that from the patient feedback on the Immuno-Oncology service Ricky ensures patients feel supported during their most difficult journey of their life.

Ricky has impacted acute patient care in many of the leadership projects. The support, mentorship and clinical supervision of the ANPs and clinical leadership of the assessment unit ensures that patients receive excellent front door care. Testament to this is the recent national patient award the ANPs on the assessment unit won in 2022. In terms of immunotherapy toxicity, patients are now managed routinely through the ambulatory unit avoiding the need for admission. In a recent patient survey 58 patients took part in the semi-structured interviews overall patient satisfaction scored highly (93% felt promptly assessed). 95% felt empowered and informed about their complications. The leadership of the work experience scheme ensures we continue to develop the healthcare staff of the future to care for our patients.

Over the last 12 months Ricky has founded a podcast called 'The Immunobuddies' which discusses topics related to acute immunotherapy toxicity investigation and management. He records this with a colleague in the Sussex and has recorded more than 80 episodes. Each is recorded at 06.45am on a Friday morning and the podcast has now been downloaded more than 25000 times in 95 countries and across six continents. This has helped to further enhance Wales reputation as an international leader in this area. It is completely not-for-profit and Ricky actually pays £30 a month to host the podcast. It is available through Apple, Sportify and other streaming platforms. Many patients have found this podcast and have asked for material tailored for them, therefore Ricky worked with patients and CNS across the UK to develop six patient podcasts that are now used across many cancer centres in the UK.

## 2. Mr Michael Rees, Consultant Breast Surgeon, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB)

Mr Michael Rees, Consultant Breast Surgeon has been a part of the ABUHB Breast Team for the last four years. During this time, he has worked continuously to improve services within the Breast Department. Understanding the pressures associated with a busy service, he actively engages with clinical and managerial colleagues in supporting local and national developments around breast care. He is well respected and valued by his colleagues and is known for his commitment in helping and supporting patients who are referred and treated within ABUHB.

Mr Rees has worked to design and develop a free, online, interactive breast referral prioritisation tool, aimed to be used by colleagues in primary care when assessing patients who present with breast symptoms. This tool is a prime example of how the right initiatives can assist in not only improving operational services, but also offer support and advice for clinical teams.

The volume of breast referrals being received by the health board is gradually increasing year on year and a systematic approach was taken to assess how the service is supported in trying to manage this demand. Mr Rees was pro-active in his role and recognised some advances that could be made around the referrals being received into the department.

Recognising guidance and education is key for both referrers and breast surgeons, Mr Rees developed the prioritisation tool which guides referrers, providing essential information and advice on how to refer and categorise referrals to the breast service. Receiving referrals with accurate and precise information allows the surgeons to manage and assess patient symptoms to ensure referrals are prioritised appropriately. By doing so we are able to investigate the patients in a timely manner, prioritising patients with a suspected cancer. This can only be done effectively when accurate information is provided by the referrer.

The tool is based on the most recent national, regional and local guidelines for managing breast disease and covers both urgent suspected cancer (USC) and benign presentations. The tool was launched in October 2022 and can be accessed by the following QR code:



Since launch the tool has been used over 1500 times. Feedback has been encouraging with 88% of users feeling the tool is useful and 98% finding the tool easy to use. Qualitative feedback demonstrated users found the tool useful and reassuring, particularly when making a non-USC referral. Referral compliance with the current guidelines has improved since the launch of the tool with both the downgrade rate (12% versus 24%) and upgrade rate (14% versus 20%) for referrals falling significantly within our health board.

The breast referral prioritisation tool is a free and useful resource for users in primary care and has been well received, demonstrating long term continued uptake. The tool has, in part, contributed to an improvement in the quality of referrals received from primary care which improves the efficiency of the breast service. The tool is also versatile and can be adapted for use in other health boards and also modified for use by other tumour sites if indicated.

The time and dedication that Mr Rees has put into this tool, in addition to his clinical commitments is a reflection of his work ethic and commitment to service improvement.

### 3. Dr Meleri Morgan, Consultant Histopathologist, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board

Dr Meleri Morgan is a phenomenal pathologist who works quietly, largely behind the scenes, delivering excellent care across a number of areas, most notably in patient diagnostic work, importantly in gastrointestinal and breast cancer. Meleri has supported the Cardiff and Vale lower GI cancer Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), almost single handedly, as the lead pathologist for 20 years. She also is the expert pathologist in the local breast MDT, national peritoneal cancer MDT, inflammatory bowel disease MDT and more recently supported the setting up of the Cardiff malignancy of unknown origin MDT.

Meleri is often asked to talk at national meetings to give her expertise on the latest advances in pathology, especially in areas of bowel cancer, premalignant conditions of the bowel or inflammatory bowel disease. She recently spoke at the Welsh Association of Gastroenterologists (WAGE), for whom she was also the previous pathology lead.

Meleri supports a number of important national trials as an expert pathologist, most recently the [CONSCOP trial](#) for colonoscopy. She is the Expert Advisor and Quality Assurance pathologist for the Bowel Screening Wales programme.

Meleri is the current Head of the School of Pathology for Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) as well as the Welsh lead examiner for the FRCPath exam in histopathology. Meleri is an active trainer in the department of cellular pathology in Cardiff and has been educational supervisor to numerous generations of pathologists. More recently she was instrumental in training Wales' first reporting consultant biomedical scientist.

Meleri has been successful in developing and setting up a completely new and novel training programme for biomedical scientists to be trained to report, independently, low-risk polyps from the bowel cancer screening programme. This project was supported and validated by the Institute of Biomedical Scientists and Royal College of Pathologists. With support and funding from Moondance Cancer Initiative, this pilot has successfully recruited the first scientists to the programme, who will be trained over the course of the next year to report bowel polyps, improving the turnaround time for these time critical specimens, as well as improving the patient experience.

Having a sensible, knowledgeable and capable colleague to go to for support, be it to look at difficult diagnostic cases with, or to ask for advice on training matters is a huge benefit to the department in Cardiff, but also to the wider pathology and NHS services across the whole country. Meleri' s all-round contribution to pathology should be recognised as well as her specific achievements in innovation, clinical trials and pathology education.

## 4. Ms Zoe Barber, Consultant Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

### 1st Nomination

Nominating Zoe Barber for this award was an easy decision to make. Over the last three years as Clinical Lead and now Clinical Director for Breast services, she has worked tirelessly to make systemic change to pathways and care for the patients of Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. I have been fortunate enough to work alongside Zoe to work on enhancing patient experiences specifically on the Single Cancer Pathway. When we started together, we had a 14 week wait for a first appointment and following investment into our service, we managed to bring this back to within 14 days. The one thing that sticks out in my memory most of all was the passion Zoe had to fight for our patients and garner the attention and the much-needed investment to influence change.

Alongside all of this, Zoe was also working to create a new diagnostic breast centre for the patients of the Health Board. By working collaboratively with the third sector, patients, Health Board staff and Welsh Government, she brought everyone along on the journey to provide their key insight into the look and feel of the unit. The Snowdrop Breast Centre opened in the Spring of 2023 and has allowed for an enhanced area for patients to be seen and cared for while attending challenging appointments. The patient feedback has been incredibly humbling and is testament to the care and attention to detail that Zoe put into this incredible project. The unit allows for better access to care, enhanced patient flow and a calming environment for patients to experience during a difficult time.

Another area Zoe is very passionate about is the support and pathways for metastatic breast cancer. Zoe works closely with colleagues within Macmillan to advocate for metastatic breast cancer patients and arranged funding for the first Secondary Breast Cancer Macmillan Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS). This groundbreaking post allows for key care and support from a CNS who is dedicated to supporting following diagnosis. This role has now established a network for Metastatic Cancer CNS posts and has now led the way for a dedicated Breast CNS across Wales. The network has been crucial in supporting patients and has had great feedback from the events that have been held for the CNS teams and patients.

Zoe's impactful efforts in enhancing patient pathways for Metastatic Breast Cancer are now a reality. Collaborating closely with the key figures from NHS Wales, Cancer Network and Macmillan, Zoe and the team have achieved a significant milestone by conceptualising and implementing the inaugural National Optimal Pathway for Metastatic Breast Cancer across Wales. This groundbreaking initiative ensures efficient and consistent diagnosis and treatment protocols, addressing a longstanding gap in the healthcare system that had left patients feeling neglected. Zoe's unwavering dedication, empathy and determination have translated this into reality, promising benefits for patients well into the future which makes her the perfect nomination for the Excellence - Medical category.



## 2nd Nomination

I would like to nominate Zoe Barber who headed up the team to develop this pathway alongside all those clinicians and patients who worked together in a timely and positive way to make this happen. The can-do attitude of all those on the working group, with already hugely busy workloads, needs to be recognised and commended.

The single cancer pathway for Primary Breast Cancer was first established in July 2019. On the pathway an arrow pointed to secondary / advanced and metastatic disease as this had not been developed and we hoped it would be in the future. What was known was that no patient data was available or collated for this patient group. In addition to this was feedback from patients all throughout Wales (Inthis2gether patient groups) that felt their treatment pathway was: very varied, inconsistent, lacking in support and that they had to advocate for themselves at every opportunity. This left many patients feeling invisible.

Patient support and experience varied hugely across Wales and within Health Boards.

In response to this, in 2023 working with David Rees MS, Tassia Haines (patient advocate), Marguerite Holloway (Macmillan Breast Cancer Lead), Ann Baker (retired Secondary breast cancer nurse) and Zoe Barber formed a working group to look at making change happen for this disease. Part of our dream was that we would have a pathway.

Zoe offered to take this pathway forward on behalf of the Wales Cancer Network (as then) and all her patients that went onto develop secondary disease. Zoe led the team of willing oncologists, secondary breast nurses, radiographers, GPs and specialists to work on the pathway. Patient feedback was at the heart of the work – provided through groups and Mags Holloway gave input and ideas from the insight received. The pathway was completed in record time (6 months). This was made possible because of the input from clinical expert colleagues and patients with lived experience, and project support provided through the WCN.

This experience was so engaging for all involved as it was a coming together for the greater good and a positive outcome. The pathway is now written and circulated with sign off approved and patients having been consulted throughout Wales and given a participative voice.

## 5. Dr Craig Barrington, Consultant Oncologist, Swansea Bay and Hywel Dda University Health Boards

Over the past two years, since becoming a consultant Oncologist Craig Barrington has been influential in improving care for patients with colorectal cancer in Wales.

Craig works as a consultant Oncologist in Swansea Bay and is also responsible for delivering oncological care to colorectal patients in Hywel Dda University Health Board – covering West Wales. He attends Glangwili hospital weekly to run clinics to assess new patients and to provide ongoing care for patients.

We work with Craig as Colorectal Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialists supporting patients and families in west Wales, and we are very fortunate to work with an enthusiastic and empathetic Oncologist who treats patients and staff with respect. We work well as a team and Craig has excellent leadership skills resulting in a team of happy and motivated staff. He is an inspiring individual and his constant aim is to ensure better cancer outcomes in Wales, and he is influential in driving change in a rapidly evolving speciality. He always provides a positive care experience for patients and their families ensuring they are personally involved in healthcare decisions and always ensures that appropriate treatment is offered.

Craig introduced Dostarlimab, a drug that targets a specific variant of colorectal cancer, into Wales through the One Wales Process. Wales is the first and remains the only country in the world to have routine access to this treatment. Dostarlimab (immunotherapy) is given intravenously every three weeks for six months for patients with dMMR/MSI high Stage II / III rectal cancer. This comes following a phase II trial with 36 patients showing a 100% complete response.

There was much media interest regarding Dostarlimab and Craig was interviewed by BBC Wales and the item was broadcast. This has resulted in him being contacted by patients from all over Wales and beyond requesting treatment and asking for advice.

He was recently nominated by a patient who was treated by Dostarlimab for a Patient Choice Award and in her nomination the lady stated that “Dr Barrington not only saved my life but my quality of life. I am so grateful to have met him and he is an outstanding doctor who goes above and beyond for his patients”

Craig is leading on the development of Contact Radiotherapy into Wales. He has initiated a Health Technology Wales report on the use of contact radiotherapy for Early Rectal Cancer (<T3bN1) alongside external beam radiotherapy as an organ preservation approach. He is currently in the process of exploring options to provide a service in South Wales, to increase access and ensure equity of access to this treatment for all Welsh patients. (North Wales have an agreement for their patients to be treated in Liverpool.) The addition of this report is recommending all patients, not just those unfit for surgery, to be considered for this treatment.

It gives us pleasure to nominate Craig for an award as it would be great to see him being recognised for his work in improving cancer treatments to benefit patients in Wales

## 6. Dr Sinan Eccles, Consultant in Respiratory Medicine & Lead for Operational Lung health check pilot, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Dr Sinan Eccles has been a driving force for the Lung Health Check Programme in Wales and his tireless determination and commitment has taken this from an initial scoping report to the delivery of an operational pilot and the introduction of a dedicated team to undertake the scoping for a national service for Wales from April 2024.

His clinical leadership has been critical in ensuring that the Wales Targeted Lung Health Check pilot has been successfully delivered by Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board in conjunction with Wales Cancer Network. Prior to the commencement of the pilot, Dr Eccles was instrumental in scoping, planning and researching the role of targeted lung cancer screening and how it could be extended to meet Wales' population.

The pilot has enabled a number of early-stage cancers to be diagnosed in participants, broadening opportunities for curative treatment. In conjunction with this, there has also been a large number of patients referred to smoking cessation services who have engaged with quit attempts and other important incidental findings identified and acted upon. Without Dr Eccles' determination and proactive approach to improve diagnosis for patients, these findings may not have been identified until a later symptomatic stage, when curative treatments may not have been possible.

Patient and public involvement (PPI) have consistently been at the forefront of his planning, keen to involve focus groups to address emotional and practical barriers to participation and understanding of strategies to integrate smoking cessation based on participant's experiences. This feedback has enabled the development of patient information materials which are accessible and solutions to address barriers to engagement. Dr Eccles' knowledge and evidence-based approach to optimise uptake have proven highly effective, demonstrated by excellent uptake (58.3%) of the Wales Targeted Lung Health Check Pilot, significantly outperforming average uptake from the NHS England Lung Health Check phase 1-2 projects (average uptake 34%, range 21-48%). This has generated exceptional feedback from participants and communities involved both formally and informally.

His excellent communication skills have supported involvement and engagement of multiple stakeholders, including charity and industry support, with this common goal. The pilot has attracted visits from Eluned Morgan, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, Buffy Williams, MS for Rhondda, and has been referred to in the Senedd by Mark Drakeford, then First Minister of Wales.

Dr Eccles' gentle and friendly leadership skills have developed a strong-knit and enthusiastic team and a culture of improvement, learning and reflection driven to bring benefits directly for patients. He is an approachable team member and has been a tremendous support for others, encouraging and nurturing development in others.

Dr Eccles' willingness to approach a challenge bravely and be ready to adapt as needed and solve problems has been crucial, remaining unfazed by hurdles along the way. His friendly, optimistic and down-to-earth approach have been inspiring as he advocates for improving early diagnosis for patients at risk of lung cancer. He is a fantastic clinician and leader; we feel very worthy of this Medical Excellence award!

## 7. Simone Sebastiani, Colorectal Cancer Surgeon, Hywel Dda University Health Board

Simone Sebastiani is a colorectal cancer surgeon who was successful in attaining the role of 'Research Champion' in the 'Enabling Research' study led by Professor Dean Harris (funded by Moondance Cancer Initiative). His role was to collaboratively work with his team to increase Colorectal and GI research activity within the Hywel Dda University Health Board, in which he excelled. Hywel Dda had a limited number of 41 participants enrolled on clinical trials and studies at the beginning of the project. Within eighteen months they had recruited a significant 997 patients to studies.

I am writing to enthusiastically nominate this individual for this prestigious award in recognition of his exceptional contributions to increasing research within the NHS. Simone has shown himself to be a dedicated and passionate consultant who has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advancing research and fostering positive change in the clinical setting. He has an unwavering and infectious passion for research. His enthusiasm for research has been contagious, inspiring colleagues and team members to explore new avenues and push the boundaries of knowledge. He has embraced the role of 'Research Champion' and proven to esteemed colleagues that balancing research with practice can be achieved with the relevant support. He has already continued with his research commitments and submitted independent grant funding applications. Please find below a link to a case study that showcases the positive impact and influence of how Simone Sebastiani contributed to an empowered research culture - <https://moondance-cancer.wales/projects/enabling-research>. He was also invited to present at the annual Health Care Research Wales Conference to showcase the positive outcomes of the study. See link to 'A surgeon in research' [Health and Care Research Wales Conference 2023 | Health Care Research Wales](#).

What is unique about Simone is that he makes each one of his team members feel valued and empowered and I believe that this is one of his best qualities which has contributed to his success in this role. He understands that achieving results cannot happen in isolation. He has actively fostered a collaboration among multidisciplinary teams, bridging the gap between clinicians and research. He encouraged open dialogue, knowledge sharing, and cross-functional teamwork, creating an environment where everyone's expertise contributed to success.

I believe that his continued passion for research in Colorectal and GI cancer will extend in the future to nurturing the next generation of clinical researchers, ensuring that the NHS remains at the forefront of medical advancements, ultimately enhancing patient care and outcomes.

[END]