**CITRuS study harnesses online technology to improve patient experience**

A new study has opened at the Royal Surrey Hospital that is expected to improve the way symptoms of treatments for bowel cancer are reported, and communicated to patients.

The CITRuS study is trialling the use of online surveys to collect accurate and regularly-updated information on patients’ symptoms before and after treatment. The responses to these surveys will create an ongoing constantly-updated record of patients’ experiences.

This data can then be used by doctors when advising new patients on potential symptoms that may follow treatment of bowel cancer with surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. It is also going to be used to help doctors identify where patients might need extra help or support through their treatment journey. In the future the study will then help to deliver simple techniques by online means aiming to improve these symptoms.

Chief Investigator, Dr Alex Stewart said: “Currently, the medical team collects information on patients’ symptoms before and after treatment through direct questions in a clinic setting. It’s recognised that patient-reported symptoms often differ from doctor-documented symptoms, and over time, this leads to inaccuracies in doctors’ descriptions of the effects of cancer or cancer treatment to patients.

“Patients told us an accurate description of expected symptoms is important when they are choosing their treatment. Although bowel cancer mostly affects older demographics, the prevalence of smartphones, and the high level of computer literacy across the population means we are confident that patients will find our online surveys easy to complete,” she said.

“We expect this study will also give us a more accurate and timely picture of the patient experience, which in turn will help our doctors communicate with patients more effectively, and ensure that patients are given the clearest possible information before undergoing treatment.”

Study participants will answer online questionnaires at study entry and monthly during follow up, over a two-year period. The questions are related to health and well-being with a holistic approach. The survey will take approximately 45 minutes to answer the first time and then 15 minutes at later times and can be completed on a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

The study is being jointly funded by the local charities BRIGHT and GUTS and supported by the Royal Surrey Hospital. The study is expected to open in 4 more UK sites over the next 6 months.