

Update from Evelina London re infection risks associated with heater cooler units used in open-heart surgery

Message for Parents/Families from Dr Aaron Bell, Evelina London Children's Hospital

Dear parents and families,

I'm sure many of you will have seen reports in the media about a rare infection affecting a small number of patients who have had open heart surgery. It is related to the use of heater-cooler units which are an essential piece of equipment during open heart surgery, and the possibility of bacterium getting into the air. The majority of patients who have been affected are adults having valve replacements.

Although rare (1 in 5000 operations), this is a national issue, and NHS England and Public Health England are in the process of providing updated guidance to hospitals, patients and their families about it. However, it is something that GSTT has been monitoring very closely, in both children and adults, as they do with any infection. Based on the reports over the weekend our infection control team have said today: "After a thorough review of all patients we have not identified any cases at GSTT".

The advice so far is that if your child is well then you don't need to do anything. Initial information sent from NHS England can be read below, and should be updated shortly.

I know something like this is always a worry for parents, especially after everything their children have been through, but the risk of this is extremely low, much lower than the other risks of having open heart surgery. We are hoping for updates from NHS England as soon as possible and will keep you posted with any new information as it comes to hand.

Best wishes

Dr Aaron Bell

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