

Ours will be St Mark's response to the challenges of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The seasonal period is a time to pause; to reflect on the year just gone. 2020 has been unlike any other year the world has faced; Covid-19 has changed life as we know it, bringing new challenges that we never expected or planned for.

At the end of an extremely difficult year, we reflect on the stories of medical professionals at St Mark's who were on the Covid-19 frontline. In these individuals' examples, we are able to see how St Mark's provided continuity of care to its colorectal and gastroenterology patients and used resourcefulness and imagination to lift peoples' spirits during a healthcare crisis.



The rainbow has been the symbol of hope during Covid-19.

The stories we have shared represent the rainbows in our darkest moments of the pandemic. They reveal how St Mark's:

- Provided continuity of care to surgical patients in extremely challenging circumstances, helping patients like Oliver return to doing the things they love.
- Maintained key services which ensured patients still had access to St Mark's medical professionals.
- Used innovations in technology to maintain connection between isolated patients on wards and their loved ones at a time when no visitors were allowed and the need for moral support was at its greatest.
- Used the power of music to support staff and patient well-being.

However, as the dawn of a New Year approaches, and with uncertain times still ahead, St Mark's healthcare heroes need your messages of support.

These will not only help to restore their hope, but your donation could support the Hospital's life-restoring research. Some of this research has transformed in importance and relevance in the wake of Covid-19.

Thank you in advance for your message, and for your support.

Yours sincerely

Jason Bacon
CEO, St Mark's Hospital Foundation



Open the camera on your smartphone and hover it over this QR code to access our JustGiving page to make a donation, or refer to the enclosed donation slip for other giving options. On our Campaign Page, a video of Dr Pitcher is available where you can hear him play an emotional rendition of, 'Somewhere over the rainbow,' a song synonymous with not losing hope for brighter days.

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SHOWING GUTS THROUGH COVID-19

What will be your enduring memory from 2020?



A future free from the fear of bowel disease





Oliver is recovering well after undergoing major surgery at St Mark's during the first Covid-19 surge for his IBD, which involved removal of his colon and the formation of a stoma.



CONTINUITY OF SURGICAL CARE DURING A HEALTHCARE CRISIS

Mr Janindra Warusavitarne

Teenager, Oliver, has ulcerative colitis, a type of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) which causes chronic inflammation in the colon.

Mr Janindra Warusavitarne, a consultant surgeon at St Mark's, performed major surgery on Oliver during the first Covid-19 surge. He says, "My colleagues and I had to manage competing priorities during the pandemic so we could continue to provide the best treatment to our patients, especially when the Hospital was overwhelmed."

In gratitude to his medical team, and with a desire to help other patients, Oliver has launched the @thekidwithabag campaign. This aims to raise awareness of bowel disease, and inspire and connect people experiencing similar health challenges.

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IT IS A SOURCE OF IMMENSE JOY TO SEE OLIVER THRIVE, AND TO HEAR HIM SAY THAT HE HAS HIS LIFE BACK.



UK IT
INDUSTRY
AWARDS

WINNER

Some of the Stay.Connected video-calling team (Dr Anu Obaro, left; Miss Isabel Martin, centre; Dr Oliver Duxbury, right). The Stay.Connected initiative has been awarded the prestigious Healthcare Project of the Year Award 2020 by the UK IT Industry Awards.

HOW COLLEAGUES PULLED TOGETHER TO LIFT PATIENTS' SPIRITS

Dr Anu Obaro, Miss Isabel Martin & Dr Oliver Duxbury

When St Mark's research fellows, Dr Anu Obaro, Miss Isabel Martin and Dr Oliver Duxbury were redeployed during the first Covid-19 surge, they worked with colleagues in other departments to develop the award-winning Stay.Connected video-calling initiative. This was a rapid response to an identified patient need.

At a time when visitors were not allowed on hospital wards, Stay.Connected bridged the distance between isolated inpatients and their families, becoming a lifeline for almost two hundred patients; the impact of this cannot be overstated.

For Anu, Isabel and Oliver, "Being able to make hundreds of video calls at a time when our patients needed it the most was incredibly rewarding. Many relatives had not spoken to their family member for weeks, and they believe the call gave their loved one strength to get better."

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STAY.CONNECTED PROVIDED US WITH RENEWED PURPOSE AT AN EXCEPTIONALLY CHALLENGING TIME.



WINNER

St Mark's IBD Nurse Consultant, Lisa Younge (second from left) with some of her team. Lisa won the British Journal of Nursing 'Gastrointestinal/IBD Nurse of the Year' national award in 2020 for the development of new IBD services.



ENSURING PATIENT ACCESS TO CORE SERVICES AT A TIME OF EXTREME PRESSURE

Lisa Younge and the IBD nursing team

The St Mark's Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) advice line is often the first port of call for the Hospital's 5,000 Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis patients, providing vital access to specialist IBD services. Covid-19 intensified the pressures on this core St Mark's service; in April 2020, the number of patients accessing the advice line more than doubled.

Despite the pressures, Lisa says, "We were committed to keeping the IBD advice line and day care unit running, and continuing with regular scheduled appointments by telephone whenever possible. A patient that accessed the IBD advice line twice during the pandemic credits her recovery to the guidance she received from my colleagues. She is grateful that we continue to maintain the service which, in turn, keeps her connected to St Mark's IBD professionals."

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PATIENTS REMAIN AT THE CENTRE OF OUR DECISION-MAKING, AS WE ADAPT AND RESPOND TO AN EVER-CHANGING ENVIRONMENT.



St Mark's Consultant Gastroenterologist, Dr Max Pitcher – bringing joy to staff and patients through music, its own kind of medicine.

MUSIC FOR STAFF AND PATIENT WELL-BEING

Dr Max Pitcher

As a senior St Mark's Consultant Gastroenterologist, Dr Max Pitcher has had a long career supporting patients with IBD.

He is also a talented violinist that has been serenading patients during the pandemic, and playing emotionally-charged performances for colleagues affected by Covid-19: nurse, Alicia, whose four week battle with the virus required hospitalisation, described the musical experience as overwhelming and a wonderful surprise.

Dr Pitcher says, "Through violin playing at the hospital, I have been able to cut through the harsh reality and create a special moment that people could connect with. I have looked into the patient's face and seen it change."

Dr Pitcher continues to use music to inspire hope during these uncertain times.

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I KNOW I HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE TO THEM IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT AND THAT HAS REALLY TOUCHED ME AS WELL.