**New Self Referral Service for Prostate Cancer Testing**

Doctors at University Hospital Southampton (UHS) have launched a new self-referral service for men who have symptoms of prostate cancer or are at higher risk of developing it.  It comes following a “dramatic drop” in referrals which led to a decrease of 23 per cent in men starting treatment across the region at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although referrals have increased in recent weeks, experts say there are still many men “missing” from the usual numbers seen in clinic.

The project focuses on improving access to specialists, raising awareness of early symptoms and information about testing. If considered high risk after completing an initial assessment questionnaire, men will be offered a range of investigations without the need for a GP referral.

These include a blood test known as a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test which measures levels of a protein in the blood that is only found in the prostate gland and is often elevated in men with this form of cancer.

They will also be offered other tests if required, such as scans, urinary function assessment and prostate biopsies.

More than 47,500 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer every year in the UK and it is the most common form of cancer in men. It occurs mainly in men aged over 50.

Ethnicity, family history and gene-related cancers – specifically carriers of the BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations most commonly associated with breast, ovarian, prostate and pancreatic cancers – can also increase the risk.

It is estimated that one in eight men will be diagnosed with it in their lifetime and more than 11,500 die from the disease every year in the UK.

Prostate symptoms or lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) can include slow urine flow, going frequently, getting up at night, difficulty emptying the bladder or blood in the urine.

Men with early disease often have no symptoms while those who do suffer symptoms could find they are related to prostate enlargement, though they can also occur with advancing prostate cancer.

Men can self-refer to UHS by emailing prostatehealthtest@uhs.nhs.uk where they will receive an automated response with information and a prostate cancer risk assessment questionnaire.

If they wish to proceed to testing they can request an appointment for a PSA test and nurse-led urinary assessment.  If this assessment highlights the need for further investigation, an MRI will be performed to determine if a cancer is present or advice and treatment of urinary symptoms will be provided.

Men are also able to check their PSA results and see clinic letters using the My Medical Record app which is free and available to any patient who has used services at UHS. They will need to register to use the app.