

New equipment saves patients' blood and reduces transfusions

Patients undergoing major hip surgery and vascular surgery at Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in Dorchester are less likely to need blood transfusions, thanks to new equipment. Blood lost during operations can be washed, filtered and given back to patients while they are still asleep.

Mr Kedric Reason, aged 65 from Beaminster in West Dorset, recently underwent extensive surgery using this new method, called autologous cell salvage. All the blood lost following surgery was given back to Mr Reason, which meant a rapid and safe recovery without needing a blood transfusion.

Patients having this kind of surgery at Dorset County Hospital now have amongst the shortest patient stays in the country.

Mr Reason said: 'I was really pleased that this machine was used during my operation. I only had to stay 4 days in hospital, which would normally have been more like 7 full days. The hospital was brilliant.'

The new cell salvage machine has been used for over 100 hip operations. Hip surgeon, Mr Peter Ward, now insists all re-do hip operations have the machine available. On average, the equivalent of nearly two pints of blood are given back to each patient while they are still asleep.

Furthermore, with new postoperative drain systems recently introduced at Dorset County Hospital, any blood loss after major hip surgery is filtered and given back within 12 hours of surgery. The need to use donated blood for these patients has been halved. Risks of infection are reduced and a more rapid recovery seen.

Mr Ward said: 'The need for blood donors remains but using this cell saver machine and new drains allows precious donated blood to be saved for those needing emergency transfusions.'

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