

**24 November 2014 - Press Release**

## **The Oliver Memorial Award 2104**

For the first time in its 66 year history, The Oliver Memorial Award has been awarded to two nurses for their work in transfusion medicine.

Catherine Howell and Shirley Murray were presented with their award at a ceremony in London on 21 November.

The Oliver Memorial Award has been given since 1948 to: "uphold the principle of voluntary blood donation; give public recognition to both professional and lay people who have made an outstanding contribution to the Science, Practice or Administration of Blood Transfusion."

Catherine Howell is currently the Chief Nurse for Diagnostic and Therapeutic Services at NHS Blood and Transplant, which includes the management of Therapeutic Apheresis Services.

In 2002, Catherine established a new national team of Transfusion Liaison Nurses to support clinical colleagues to improve transfusion safety. In the following years she was instrumental in developing guidelines for the safe and effective use of blood components, which included the DH Better Blood Transfusion (BBT) Health Service Circulars.

Ensuring that patients and the public have a right to be involved in their care, Catherine also championed the need for a patient voice on the Chief Medical Officer's National Blood Transfusion Committee which subsequently led to the formation of the Patient Involvement Working Group.

Working with colleagues Catherine also recognised the opportunity for nurses to improve clinical practice by extending their role to prescribe blood. This led to the publication of the framework for the non-medical prescribing of blood components.

She is a member of the DH Advisory Committee on the Safety Committee of Blood, Tissues and Organs, and led an important piece of work on consent for transfusion.

Catherine Howell said: I am very proud to receive this award which acknowledges the contribution of nursing in this specialist field of practice. I am delighted that the value of nurses in driving advancements in transfusion practice will now be recognised as part of the prestigious Oliver Memorial Award in the future'.

Shirley Murray held the post of Regional Haemovigilance Coordinator for Northern Ireland until her retirement in 2014.

Shirley's work in this role included following the appropriate use of red cells in Northern Ireland audit with a detailed action plan for improvement which has led to Northern Ireland having the most restrictive red cell transfusion practice in western Europe. Shirley was also instrumental in Northern Ireland becoming the first UK region to have implemented competency assessment as recommended by National Patient Safety Agency. This involved leading on the training and competency assessment of over 20,000 staff in health and social



care. Shirley has also demonstrated innovation in practice and, along with medical colleagues, has implemented a bloodless pathway for patients which is now standard care in Northern Ireland hospitals and precedes the current concept of patient blood management.

Shirley Murray said: I am thrilled and feel very honoured to have received this award. I am also delighted by the recognition this gives to the contribution many nurses make around the UK in transfusion medicine and that in future years the award will again be given to nurses.

We have a very proactive Northern Ireland Transfusion Committee and throughout my transfusion career I was very fortunate to receive their fullest support. However many of the achievements made in transfusion safety throughout Northern Ireland would not have been possible without the hard work, motivation and dedication of staff in the Northern Ireland Haemovigilance Team that I was very privileged to lead.

Dr Lorna Williamson, the Chair of The Royal College of Pathologist's Transfusion Medicine Specialty Advisory Committee which judges the nominees for the award said:  
"The committee wanted to recognise Catherine and Shirley's dedication and commitment which has advanced the work of transfusion medicine and blood donation especially in the field of nursing practice. Both Catherine and Shirley have demonstrated skill, innovation and collaborative working ultimately for the benefit of patients. In recognition of the key role nurses play across transfusion medicine, awards for nurses will now be regularly incorporated into the Percy Lane Oliver award cycle. I think he would have approved. "

The Oliver Memorial Fund was established in 1944 following the death of Percy Lane Oliver who won international recognition for creating, as a member of the Camberwell Division of the Red Cross, the world's first voluntary blood donor service in 1921.

The administration of the award has been held by The Royal College of Pathologists since 2001 to ensure its future. The College now appraise and choose the recipients of the Award. To date there have been over one hundred recipients, including many famous names in the field of blood transfusion. Records of Oliver's work are deposited in the Royal Archives, the International Red Cross in Geneva, the British Red Cross Society, and the Wellcome Trust, besides many university and public libraries.

**Ends**

**For further information/photos please contact The Royal College of Pathologists' Press and Communications Office on 020 7451 6752. Mobile; 0757 834 9018 or email: [samantha.jayaram@rcpath.org](mailto:samantha.jayaram@rcpath.org).**

#### **Notes for editors**

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