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University to become a national training centre for NHS Blood and Transplant healthcare professionals

Northumbria University, Newcastle has been selected by NHS Blood and Transplant as a national training centre for organ donation.

The University will now play a leading role in helping to train those working in this critical area, with hundreds of specialist nurses and critical care doctors from across the UK receiving the latest in simulation education training at Northumbria to boost their skills.

The announcement is timely as the University hosted the World Transplant Games Opening Ceremony on Saturday 17 August in front of 2,500 spectators along with ongoing fixtures including table tennis and badminton at its multimillion pound facility Sport Central.

More than 1,500 people from 59 countries around the world are taking part in the Games, which continue until Saturday 24 August, competing in 16 sporting events across 13 venues in the North East. All of the competitors have all either received transplants or are from families who have chosen to donate organs.

NHSBT selected Northumbria University to deliver some of this specialist training to health care professionals over the next three years because of its expertise in simulation education and its first-class health facilities.

Dr Alan Platt, Associate Professor in Simulation-based Education at Northumbria University, said: “The NHS Blood and Transplant service wants to ensure its staff are equipped with the very latest skills, knowledge and theoretical thinking to deliver a world class service.

“They recognise the quality of the training we can provide here at Northumbria and we are delighted to have been chosen as a national centre of excellence for organ donation training.”

Dr Platt leads the University’s simulation training provision, which combines virtual, immersive and augmented reality with computerised manikins and role-play using trained actors, to create situations which are as close as possible to real-life.

He explains: “We will be training the specialist nurses and doctors who are on the frontline of organ donation with meaningful, practical and theoretical clinical practice which will meet the aim of NHS Blood and Transplant in providing excellent care in support of families considering organ donation and potential donors.

“It is poignant the announcement comes as the University hosts some of the elite transplant athletes from across the world who are here in the region for the World Transplant Games.”

The training will be delivered within the University's Clinical Skills Centre – a state-of-the-art facility within the University's Department of Nursing, Midwifery and Health. The University has invested heavily in recent years to ensure it can provide the latest knowledge in technology enhanced learning to enable participants to take part in virtual reality training exercises and the centre now includes an anaesthetic room, operating theatre and recovery room, alongside hospital wards and a home setting, observation suites and an immersive studio to provide a realistic training environment.

As well as Northumbria's outstanding facilities, and contemporary technologies, its proven track record in working in partnership with NHS organisations contributed extensively towards it being chosen as a national training centre by NHS Blood and Transplant.

Northumbria is embracing technology to be at the forefront of research, education and knowledge exchange and this collaboration fuses this ambition with that of NHS Blood and Transplant to match world class performance in organ donation and transplantation.

Academic excellence is at the heart of all the University's activities and its expertise in educational programmes, simulation-based education and healthcare practice compliments NHS Blood and Transplant's expertise to enable the delivery of high quality education and training programmes.

Dr Platt added: The heart breaking scenarios which can lead to organ donation form many exercises which healthcare professionals will be involved in during their course.

“As well as having to plan for procedures involved in organ donation, the health care professionals attending our programmes will also be taught to handle the emotional side of their work, with actors being drafted in to act out parts of family members and loved ones.”

An NHS Blood and Transplant service spokesman said: “We are delighted to be working alongside Northumbria University as one of our centres for both Specialist Nurse in Organ Donation training and courses for Intensive Care Medicine senior doctors. The state of the art facilities as well as the expertise of Northumbria's staff enable us to simulate, in as real way as possible, both emotive communication scenarios and clinical situations that enable delegates to both learn and gain confidence in their skills in a safe and

wholly supportive environment.”

There will be a greater focus on organ donation next year with a law change in England. From spring 2020, organ donation in England will move to an ‘opt out’ system. It means that all adults in England will be considered to have agreed to be an organ donor when they die – unless they have recorded a decision not to donate or are in an excluded group.

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