



PRESS RELEASE

22 November 2002

HEALTH MINISTER JOHN HUTTON OPENS NEW SCANNERS

Two new state of the art scanners at the University Hospital of North Tees, which are managed and staffed by Alliance Medical, have been opened by Health Minister John Hutton.

The first – a CT scanner - was installed by North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust at the hospital in March 2002 as part of the Department of Health's capital investment programme for CT scanners (3rd phase) at a cost of £490,000.

The scanner produces internal images of the body to diagnose conditions, with clearer, more detailed images produced more quickly than by previous equipment. For example, patients with cancer can now have the severity of their disease assessed much more accurately than before, meaning fewer alternative diagnostic tests are needed.

The machine's faster scanning process has resulted in a 27% increase in the number of patients being scanned.

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The second scanner – a new MRI scanner costing £850,000 - was installed at the University Hospital of North Tees in May 2002 by Alliance Medical. This scanner provides more detailed information than CT scanners and does not use radiation. It also provides scanning techniques, such as, angiography, which produces images of the blood vessels, as well as being a more patient friendly design that is less claustrophobic than the old system.

In addition, Alliance Medical, who took over the staffing and management of the MRI Centre on 1 December 2001, installed workstations in each of the Trust's consultant radiologists' offices at a cost of £56,000. This has increased the efficiency of the radiologists, allowing them to view and interact with images from the MRI and the Trust's CT scanner images.

Health Minister John Hutton said: "I am very pleased to be here to witness for myself the rapid progress being made in securing better cancer services for patients. These two scanners mean more local patients are getting access to the quick diagnosis and treatment they need.

"Now, almost half the CT scanners currently working in the NHS are new since January 2000, while MRI scanners have increased by 100% since 1997, underlining the Government's commitment to expanding capacity across the NHS and delivering the 21st century health service patients deserve."

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Dr Peter Gill, clinical director for radiology at North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Trust, said: "Medical technology moves on at a terrific pace and these scanners open up huge new possibilities in diagnosis and treatment that would have been unimaginable a few years ago."

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, chairman of Alliance Medical, said, "I am delighted that the service that Alliance Medical is providing at the University Hospital of North Tees is having such a beneficial effect on the treatment of people in this area. Apart from providing and running the scanner, our introduction of workstations for radiologists has greatly improved the efficiency of the service. I believe this unit provides concrete evidence that the NHS and the private sector can work together successfully for the benefit of all patients."

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NOTE TO EDITORS

- Alliance Medical also operates the Hartlepool MRI Centre, which is at the University Hospital of Hartlepool. The MRI scanner at Hartlepool is complementary to the North Tees Centre.
- Alliance Medical currently provides MRI scans in 17 British hospitals and has a fleet of 26 mobile scanner units operating in 84 clinical locations.

**Photographs are available from AR Communications
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