



A lifetime of specialist care

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**9<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

### **Royal Brompton says 'I do' to wedding celebration**

Staff on Royal Brompton's Victoria Ward have hosted their first wedding - with help from a Kensington florist, a professional photographer and the local registrar.

Patient Christopher Mason, 57, who is receiving palliative care for idiopathic interstitial pulmonary fibrosis wed Barbra Andrews, 51 in a ceremony that was both moving and filled with joy and laughter.

The wedding was arranged within a week of Christopher being admitted with breathing problems.

"Christopher came into Royal Brompton for breathing checks on the previous Monday. The doctors saw how sick he was and admitted him immediately," explained Barbra.

"On the Wednesday, he wasn't responding. The medical staff couldn't be sure of how long he had left."

Thankfully, Christopher rallied and the couple met with palliative care nurses to discuss his care plan.

"As we were chatting, somebody said something about getting married.

Then Christopher started dropping hints, so I popped the question. He said yes!"

Christopher commented: "It's true, I did cajole Barbra into asking me.

I am on a timeline with few options left, and it's something we both wanted."

The couple only knew for sure they had secured permission to wed from the local authority days before the ceremony.

Staff and volunteers sprang into action and, along with Barbra, organised a beautiful celebration within days.

Ward sister Tasmin Fernandes said: "Carnell Aguirre the deputy charge nurse working on nights used his hidden talents to transform the ward's multi-faith room into a beautiful dream-like wedding atmosphere."

Smiling staff wished the couple well as Barbra walked up the 'aisle' – Victoria ward's main corridor.

Kensington Flowers Florist donated flowers to decorate the room while another deputy sister, Hosanna Rabano provided other materials for the decorations.

A professional photographer donated her services for free.

The staff on Victoria ward made efforts to get the groom ready, and decorate the bridal 'suite'.

After the registrar from Chelsea Town hall legally wed the couple, Royal Brompton's chaplain Mairi Lovett blessed the wedding, while a violinist, courtesy of the Trust's arts team, serenaded the party with a medley of ABBA favourites.

Tasmin added: "The wedding on the ward has made a great difference to everyone involved: patients, relatives, and all the staff who witnessed this blessed occasion."

Barbra commented: "The hospital made it so special. Staff pulled out all of the stops, I was so touched and grateful: it was an amazing day."

"To see Christopher waiting for me at the altar blew me away. I think that's when it hit us."

"We knew it was going to be emotional, but the reality was off the scale. Royal Brompton really is a hospital that cares."

The couple, who both work for the NHS at The William Harvey Hospital in Ashford, Kent, have been an item for four years after meeting at work. Barbra is a medical records clerk and Christopher was employed as an ancillary driver.

Barbra said: "Christopher is so charming, with such a great sense of humour. Even through all of his health problems, he still finds something to laugh about."

Christopher added: "There's no doubt Royal Brompton saved my life in the interim. The staff were amazing, supportive and excited for us. I'd like to thank them all."

As for the future, the couple are both acutely aware of the seriousness of Christopher's condition. Barbra added: "We do still have some hope that Christopher's health could improve and he could have a lung transplant."

"We hold on to that. It's like some light at the end of the tunnel."

## Ends

### For further information, please contact:

Lucy Hunter  
Communications officer  
Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust  
Tel: 020 7352 8121 (ext.2237) Mobile : 07891 310 924  
Email: [l.hunter@rbht.nhs.uk](mailto:l.hunter@rbht.nhs.uk)  
Follow us on Twitter: @RBandH

### Notes to editors:

Picture caption: The happy couple, Christopher Mason and Barbra Andrews.

Picture Credit: Syriol Jones syrioljones.com

For more information about idiopathic interstitial pulmonary fibrosis, please see

<http://www.rbht.nhs.uk/patients/condition/interstitial-lung-disease/>

**Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust** is the UK's largest specialist centre for the treatment of heart and lung disease. Working from two sites, Royal Brompton Hospital in Chelsea, West London, and Harefield Hospital, near Uxbridge, the Trust has an international reputation for the expertise of its staff, high standard of care and research success. Experts at the Trust help patients from all age groups who have heart and lung problems and provide some of the most complex surgery and sophisticated treatments available anywhere in the world.

The Trust is the UK's largest centre for the treatment of adult congenital heart disease and is the country's leading provider of specialist respiratory care. Over the years the Trust has been responsible for major medical breakthroughs, such as the UK's first combined heart and lung

transplant. It established the UK's first adult service for cystic fibrosis, which is now one of Europe's biggest treatment centres for the condition, and has pioneered the use of primary angioplasty for the treatment of heart attacks. Today the Heart Attack Centre at Harefield has one of the fastest arrival-to-treatment times in the UK, a crucial factor in patients' survival.

As a member of the Academic Health Science Centre (AHSC), in collaboration with Imperial College London, Imperial College Healthcare Trust and The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, the Trust helps to drive innovation and improved care for over 1.1 million patients each year in North West London, by aligning the research, education and clinical services of the partner organisations. For further information, visit [www.rbht.nhs.uk](http://www.rbht.nhs.uk)