



INCUBATOR APPEAL INTERVIEW

An interview with Peter DeHalpert, Paediatric Consultant and Lead Neonatal Consultant for Buscot Ward, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading.

What does your role involve?

As a consultant paediatrician I have responsibility for seeing acutely unwell children in the paediatric wards on a roving rota and having responsibility for the sick newborn babies on Buscot Ward and seeing all sorts of children at outpatient clinics.

The neonatal lead part of my role means that I have clinical lead responsibilities for how the neonatal unit runs and the clinical staff within it.

What are your top priorities?

My top priorities in terms of the neonatal unit are to provide a good quality, safe service as the absolute bottom line. As well as that we want to be innovative and have a heavy involvement in research. We want to have a lot of parent involvement and input into the care of their children as they are their children, not ours, we do look after them but they are not ours to keep.

We want to have a strong parental involvement in terms of the care of their babies and try to have a nice feel to the unit, a caring attitude and to have parents comfortable with somebody else having the big responsibility and privilege of looking after their children.

You have identified the need for a Giraffe Omnibed, why is this?

Giraffe Omnibeds are fantastic. It's an incubator which allows babies, in particular pre-term (Premature) babies to be effectively nursed in a thermo-regulated, so a very stable higher temperature environment and also a high humidity environment which a lot of pre-term babies need initially. It is very good at doing that, it has very good access and visibility to the baby so you can always see what the baby is doing, to see how they are without having to disturb them.

With an Omnibed you do have very good access should you need to complete a procedure or attend to the cares of a baby whenever it is needed. Should we need to undertake more invasive procedures then it has the capacity to become even more accessible, whereby the entire lid can quickly come off and immediately radiate heat down on to the baby, giving complete access to them whilst keeping them nice and warm and stable from that point of view. One of the things which we worry about is babies getting cold.

What else is good about it? Well, you can pipe oxygen into it; you can regulate the amount of oxygen that is in there. You can weigh babies in the incubator without having to lift them out and put them on a set of scales which is much better for the babies as they are far less disturbed and particularly for pre-term babies in the early days of their life. As little handling as possible is much much better for them. They are also very easy to move around should you need to.

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How is a Giraffe Omnibed different to the incubators that you have now?

We do have some Omnibeds which we very much enjoy using because of the visibility and ease of access to the babies. Some additional benefits are that if you have one of the sides of the incubator down there is an air curtain feature that keeps the



temperature stable. If you could imagine when you walk into a shop and you have that blast of hot air coming down on you as it is a very good way of keeping heat inside a space. So, with the side down you get an air curtain, with the port holes (Holes in the side of an incubator which you put your hands through) open you can switch on the air curtain which stops the incubator losing heat which some of our other incubators don't do. It has a very clever mechanism when if you are providing a lot of humidity in our older incubators, there is a tendency for the humidity to condense on the side when it's cold, this is called "Rain out" and you can't actually see the baby. The Omnibed however has a mechanism where that doesn't happen which is extremely useful.

Other additional features can be being able to weigh and calibrate oxygen levels which the other incubators cannot do. There are lots and lots of benefits, not to mention the roof coming off which is fantastic which the others do not have. This feature is available at the touch of a button if a baby requires urgent attention and immediately the built in radiant warmer kicks in and keeps them at a comfortable and stable temperature.

The benefits are such that the accessibility of it is far easier to do procedures, so you will often do the procedures fewer times. Small babies have very tiny veins which are very difficult to see, let alone work with. So, if you can get a cannula in once, first time, this reduces the stress on the baby, parents and medical staff. In other incubators you may not quite have the access that you need, making even simple procedures more difficult and cumbersome. By using an Omnibed the baby is also not getting cold, simply by not having two or three goes for that reason alone is one of the most tangible benefits from a medical point of view.

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ABOUT BIBS

BIBS (Babies in Buscot Support) is a registered charity that supports babies and their families in the special care baby unit (Buscot Ward) at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. The committee and the supporters are all parents/carers of ex-Buscot babies who have been through the experience of having a premature or full term but ill baby.

What are the benefits of this to the local community?

So we have around about five and a half to six thousand deliveries a year in the Royal Berkshire Hospital, 10% of which are admitted to the neonatal unit, so we would expect to have between 550 – 600 admissions of babies to Buscot Ward (Not



including babies that are transferred in from other hospitals). We provide maternity services to Reading, West Berkshire and Newbury then down into Bracknell and up to South Oxfordshire. So, there is a wide catchment area for our maternity population and we would expect 10% of those babies to come to the unit and many that do come in would certainly benefit from the use of an Omnibed.

Is there an immediate need for this?

In short, yes. It will make a big difference, they are so much better.

The benefits of the Omnibed are such that it does provide a far greater level of care. It's a far better piece of kit than Buscot Ward's older existing incubators and has significant benefits over the ones we already have. We're very keen to push forward and get as many of these as possible.

Anything else you'd like to add?

We hugely value the work that BIBS do and the amount of fundraising effort that goes in. It is appreciated by parents who have babies on Buscot Ward who discover which pieces of equipment have been donated or purchased via charity monies, primarily from BIBS. Their appreciation is often very heartfelt.

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CALL TO ACTION

So there you have it, the views of the Neonatal Lead Consultant for Buscot Ward. There are many ways that people can help BIBS raise the £29,000 required to purchase this much needed piece of equipment. This could be anything from a sponsored challenge, a corporate activity or holding an event. The only limit is peoples imaginations.

To find out more please contact phil@bibs.org.uk

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