

Hospital heroes who answered emergency WhatsApp call to treat tram crash victims

Croydon University Hospital



Ross Lydall Health Editor

HOSPITAL staff who treated many victims of the Croydon tram disaster were reunited today as doctors told how they sent WhatsApp phone messages to summon emergency help.

More than 60 medics, radiologists, nurses, administrators, porters and chaplaincy staff gathered as Croydon hospital agreed to the Standard's request to showcase the "phenomenal" team effort involved in treating the crash victims.

The hospital received 38 patients – including 29 "walking wounded" who all arrived in one coach – following the early-morning derailment on November 9 that left seven passengers dead.

As a major incident was declared and the usual alert system put in place, emergency department lead Dr Kathryn Channing sent a WhatsApp message to her fellow consultants appealing for help. "Fifty casualties en route from major incident need some doctors please," she texted.

Junior doctors also appealed via their WhatsApp messaging group – normally used to swap shifts – for colleagues to come to the hospital.

Dr Channing said: "It was much quicker than the departmental secretary ringing them one by one. It was genius. The response from the junior doctors was phenomenal."

The hospital emptied its A&E in 20 minutes ready for the casualties. It was able to cope despite having to run its emergency department from smaller temporary accommodation while its A&E is rebuilt. Dr Channing said: "The



HOW TEAM COPED WITH THE DISASTER



Dr Georgina Blanco, A&E registrar: "I was the A&E registrar who took the major incident over the phone. I got the first calls. I prepared the department and the team."



Dr Reza Motazed acute medical consultant: "My colleague Dr Ash and I were on the shop floor, taking the pressure off the emergency department, pulling medical patients to our unit so we can help the emergency department get on with the busy task of dealing with the incident."



Dr Amy Veena Sangam, anaesthetic registrar: With consultant Dr Katty Amir-Ansari, she cared for a seriously injured passenger who came into theatre and required transfer to a major trauma centre. "We sorted her out, gave her a general anaesthetic and transferred her over to St George's."



Mike Hayward, deputy director of nursing: "I looked after all the bereaved relatives. It was quite a traumatic and sad day. We were with some of them for 10 hours. As the day went on, it became apparent that some of them had actually lost their relatives. So quite a difficult day."

Reunited: the team of more than 60 medics, radiologists, nurses, chaplaincy staff, porters and administrators who hurried in after the Croydon disaster, left

lating injured on that day, that they were able to get themselves up, get on a coach to the emergency department to then discover that they had broken bones and quite serious and in some cases life-threatening injuries."

Dr Channing praised the "unsung heroes" such as the radiology department, which performed 12 CT scans in under an hour, the chaplaincy department and the catering department. Dr Channing had been on call at home in Dulwich when her phone rang at

"The whole trust pulled together, stepped up, and I was proud of each and every member of staff"

Dr Kathryn Channing, far left

6.50am. "I arrived at 7.10am," she said. "Casualties started arriving at 7.30am. We took the first patient by ambulance and then a coach arrived with 29 walking wounded. By 1pm I was more tired than I have ever been in my life."

"Hundreds" of staff were involved on the day. "We are all very mindful that a lot of staff know someone who was affected by the derailment," she said.

"There was a very sombre mood around the place that day and for the next few days. People took great pride in being involved. The whole trust pulled together, stepped up, and I was proud of each and every member of staff we had."

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