

WE ARE THE OFFICIAL HAEMATOLOGY CHARITY FOR KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL, LONDON

Music Therapy in Haematology at King's College Hospital



WHY MUSIC THERAPY MATTERS

In September 2024, thanks to generous donations from haematology patients and their families to King's College Hospital Charity, we welcomed a dedicated Music Therapist to our team, working one day per week to support patient wellbeing.

As we look ahead, we hope to renew this vital role from September 2025, but we will need further funding to make it possible.

Music therapy uses active music-making to bring social, physical, emotional, and cognitive benefits to patients. It is based on the belief that everyone is inherently musical - and that music can stimulate healing and promote wellbeing in powerful ways, including:

- Boosting confidence and self-esteem
- Encouraging social interaction and shared experiences
- Supporting emotional expression and mental focus
- Offering comfort, connection, and calm during treatment

Here is a reflection from a patient's husband who experienced the impact of music therapy during his wife's treatment:

May (70s)

"The music has been a great comfort." – May's husband

During her stay, May attended a weekly music group with her husband. Singing Scottish folk songs brought back treasured memories, and in one moment of reflection she said, "I was miles away then. I was in the mountains." Music helped May find peace and positivity during her recovery. [Names have been changed for confidentiality.]

This programme has already made a meaningful difference to patients on our haematology wards. With your support, we can ensure that this unique and healing experience continues.

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PAULINA'S HALF MARATHON MISSION – RUNNING IN MEMORY, RUNNING FOR HOPE

We are proud to spotlight an incredibly heartfelt fundraising journey led by Paulina, who is taking on the challenge of a half marathon to raise funds for blood cancer research in memory of her beloved father, Carlos Ondarza Villar.

After many years away from running due to injury, Paulina has found powerful motivation in honouring her father, who sadly passed away from Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML) in September 2024. Carlos's battle with AML was short but incredibly challenging, involving countless hospital visits, blood transfusions, and long periods of isolation. Yet through it all, he remained determined, hopeful, and grateful for the care he received.

In her words, Paulina is driven not only by personal loss, but also by the pressing issues she witnessed first-hand - inequality in access to timely medical care, a shortage of blood donors, the high cost of life-saving treatments, and the lack of social support for those suffering from serious illness.

Paulina shares:

"I know my own risk of developing cancer is higher, and the same goes for my children. That's why I'm committed to doing everything I can to support research, early detection, and ensure that everyone, no matter where they live, has access to high-quality, affordable care."

This run is more than a personal challenge - it's a mission filled with love, purpose, and hope for a better future.

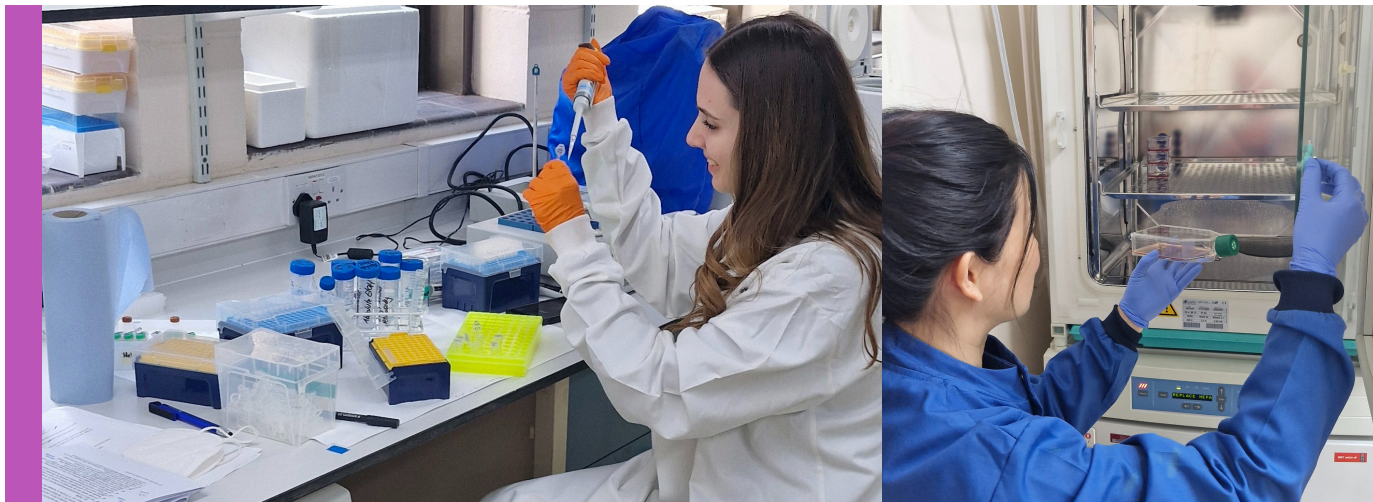
Why LIBRA?

Paulina has chosen to fundraise for LIBRA because funds raised will support patients with blood cancers and blood disorders such as AML, leukaemia, myeloma, and sickle cell disease.

LIBRA donations help fund:

- Ground-breaking research into new treatments
- Vital ward and laboratory developments
- State-of-the-art equipment used in patient care

While LIBRA doesn't directly fund treatment in Mexico, Paulina believes - as we do - that advancements in cancer care anywhere in the world benefit us all.



CURRENT RESEARCH WORK IN THE SICKLE CELL / GLOBIN GENETICS LAB AT KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL

While past research at King's College Hospital has played a vital role in the development of ground-breaking treatments for sickle cell disease, the journey is far from over. Our team continues to push the boundaries of scientific understanding - driven by one goal: to find an affordable, accessible cure for all patients.

A key focus of current research is the mysterious 'F cells' - a type of red blood cell that is naturally resistant to the effects of the sickle cell mutation. When present in higher numbers, these cells can dramatically lessen the severity of the disease. Unlocking their secrets could hold the key to life-changing treatments.

Research Assistant Helen Rooks is at the forefront of this investigation, culturing stem cells extracted from volunteers' blood and tracking the moment F cells begin to appear. She's joined by a talented visiting researcher from China, whose expertise is helping process and culture the growing number of samples.

With thousands of individual cells under the microscope, the data being generated is immense. That's why we're thrilled to welcome a passionate Master's student, who is learning to use advanced software tools to help analyse the complex findings. This collaborative environment is one of discovery and learning - nothing about this work is 'run-of-the-mill'. Every day brings new questions, challenges, and breakthroughs.

In parallel, we've launched an exciting partnership with MiNA Therapeutics, a London-based biotech start-up, to explore innovative ways to stimulate the body's production of F cells - a step that could open the door to more targeted and effective treatments.

None of this progress would be possible without the generous and ongoing backing from our supporters.

The funding has been instrumental in connecting these research threads into a cohesive strategy - enabling key experiments, investing in talent, and moving us closer to answers that could transform lives.

With your continued support, we can accelerate this research and get closer to a cure.



GALLOPING TOWARD GOOD!

On 28th March, chartered accountants Burgess Hodgson LLP hosted a fantastic Race Night at Westgate Hall, Canterbury, in aid of LIBRA Lions and Porchlight.

LIBRA Trustee Eddy Warn attended the event to represent the charity and join in the evening's fun. It was a brilliant night full of excitement, generosity, and community spirit - and an incredible amount was raised for two very worthy causes.

Here's what a representative from Burgess Hodgson LLP had to say:

"A HUGE thank you to everyone who joined us and donated raffle prizes for our annual Charity Race Night at The Westgate Hall, Canterbury!"

The evening was a huge success, beginning with inspiring introductions from our charities, Porchlight and LIBRA, about the vital work they do in our local community. Then the races kicked off, with generous bets placed across eight exciting races and a lively raffle.

Congratulations to all our winners!

Thanks to everyone's amazing support, we raised an incredible £5,684.80 for these fantastic causes.

We had a brilliant evening filled with fun, community spirit, and kindness. Here's to many more!"

A massive thank you to Burgess Hodgson LLP and everyone who made the night such a success!

My journey is about fighting on and I won't give up. The consultants support me and continue to put me forward for new clinical trials. Living with such an aggressive illness is tough, but I am still enjoying the simple things in life such as cycling and will continue to do so. It is due to the treatments available and encouragement from LIBRA that I am able to carry on as I am.

Patient - Matthew Mortimer



LIBRA AT THE LIONS 105SE DISTRICT CONVENTION

On Saturday 15th February 2025, the 53rd Convention of Lions District 105SE was held at the beautiful Canterbury Cathedral Lodge, bringing together Lions from across the district for a day of inspiration and collaboration.

LIBRA played a key role in the event, highlighting the impact of our support for the Haematology Department at King's College Hospital. LIBRA Chairman Andrew Lodge introduced Carole Cobain Patel, Head of Nursing, who shared how recent ward refurbishments - funded by LIBRA, Lions Clubs, patient donations, and LCIF - have created a more welcoming, healing environment for patients.

Carole was joined by nursing team members who shared powerful stories about caring for patients with leukaemia, myeloma, sickle cell disease, and other serious conditions, reinforcing the ongoing need for investment in haematology care.

It was a privilege to welcome District Governor Steve Carley and 2nd International Vice President Mark Lyons, who expressed their support for our work and its life-changing impact.

With over 40,000 people diagnosed with blood cancer annually in the UK, LIBRA's fundraising is more important than ever - supporting vital research, ward upgrades, and advanced equipment.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

We are always looking for patient stories to share in our newsletter, to highlight the impact King's has on lives. If you'd be open to sharing your story, we would love to hear from you.

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
LIBRA AND FUNDRAISING:**



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