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## VOICES FROM THE COVID-19 FRONTLINE

### ANAESTHESIA MUSEUM TO TELL THE STORY OF COVID-19 PATIENTS

- **Museum calls for patients to record their experiences of the pandemic for its archive and for future exhibition and displays**
- **Museum to collect the thoughts and recollections of people treated by anaesthetists**

*17/8/20* -- The museum of the Anaesthesia Heritage Centre is preparing to tell the story of the COVID-19 pandemic through the voices of patients. This year, anaesthetists have been treating critically ill patients the world over and their work is being recognised as never before. Now, the Association of Anaesthetists is collecting the testimonies of these patients to gain a new perspective on the subject of anaesthesia during a global pandemic.

The Association of Anaesthetists is home to the **Anaesthesia Heritage Centre**, which tells the remarkable story of anaesthesia, from its first public demonstration in 1846 to the founding of anaesthesia as we know it today. Formed in 1953 from the private collection of A. Charles King's historic anaesthetic apparatus, the Heritage Centre's museum, library and archive collections now include over 13,000 items.

As well as recording people's experiences for its oral history programme, the museum is collecting objects related to the pandemic. The Museum holds a large collection of equipment and drugs related to the history of ventilation and intubation. Expanding this collection to include examples from the pandemic will enable the Museum to present the full, accurate story of this aspect of anaesthesia.

**Caroline Hamson, Heritage Manager, said;** "This is a significant moment in the history of anaesthesia. The pandemic has brought the role of the anaesthetist to the attention of the general public. Anaesthetists have been on the frontline treating critically ill patients, and we want to speak to people treated by them. The patient story is often an untold aspect of medical history, and capturing these personal recollections will allow us to tell the story of the pandemic to current and future visitors and researchers. At all times, our interviews and contemporary collecting around this subject will be done with sensitivity and respect."

**Kathleen Ferguson, President of the Association of Anaesthetists and Heritage Committee Chair, said;** “During the last global pandemic the specialty of anaesthesia was still in its infancy and played no significant part in the response to ‘Spanish flu’. In 2020, modern anaesthesia and critical care have offered hope to millions of people living with the fear of contracting a serious COVID-19 infection. With current patient insights, anaesthetists can work to ensure future care is even better and more responsive to patient needs.”

Interviews are likely to begin in the autumn via Zoom. In-person interviews can be organised once the museum is able to re-open. The oral histories and new exhibits will feature in future displays telling the human story of the pandemic.

**People interested in taking part should email Caroline Hamson at [heritage@anaesthetists.org](mailto:heritage@anaesthetists.org)**

The museum will also collect hospital documentation, including items relating to workloads, staffing levels and changes to clinical guidelines. It is also keen to collect additional material that patients might have, such as photographs or ephemera (e.g. cards from hospital staff and other artefacts).

In normal times, the museum is accessible to all and free to visit. However, it has been closed since 17 March 2020 and is currently unable to re-open due to the restrictions put in place in response to the pandemic. When it reopens, the museum will feature a new interactive operating theatre, transporting visitors to a 1960s operating room, allowing them to explore anaesthesia at that time.