



Cheshire and Merseyside Surgical Centre's focus on HVLC cases will help to drive down waiting lists

Designed for purpose: specialist ophthalmics stretcher for Cataract Centre of Excellence at Victoria Infirmary

Victoria Infirmary in Northwich, Cheshire has a long history and is highly valued by its local community. It originally opened in 1887 when local business man and philanthropist, MP Robert Verdin, donated the building for use as a hospital.

Now part of Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, its latest evolution is as the location for the new Cheshire and Merseyside Surgical Centre. Formally opened in June 2025, it is part of the NHS initiative to create surgical hubs focusing mainly on providing 'High Volume Low Complexity' surgery.

The Centre will treat around 12,000 patients each year, with an immediate focus on those who have had the longest waits for treatment. It boasts two advanced operating theatres: one is a multi-specialty theatre accommodating orthopaedics, ENT, dermatology, general surgery and pain management, while the other is dedicated to cataracts (complemented by an ophthalmic treatment room, recovery area and consulting rooms), enabling Northwich to become Cataract Centre of Excellence, and a regional hub for outstanding cataract care.



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SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT, DESIGNED FOR PURPOSE

Part of the preparations for launching the new service included investigating and sourcing the most suitable equipment to support the Centre's objectives.

British designer and manufacturer of clinical equipment Anetic Aid has long been a supplier to the Trust, and one of its most recent innovations is a dedicated Ophthalmic Stretcher, designed to provide exceptional surgical access at the head end, through a sculpted backrest and shoulder area combined with a removable dual-articulating headrest.



Anetic Aid's Tracie Seed and Senior Theatre Practitioner Nino Ocampo

Anetic Aid's Regional Account Manager, Tracie Seed, was delighted to supply a model for the team to evaluate at the Trust's main hospital in Leighton, Crewe.

As a result of the trials, the Trust bought three models of the specialist stretcher which also has exceptionally low height capacity making it easy to mount / dismount (particularly for older or frail patients) – something they are able to do themselves as these kinds of procedures are carried out under local anaesthetic.

Positioning of the stretcher is power assisted via a handset or a control panel at the foot end, and includes the raising and lowering of the main platform and the backrest. There is also a KneeFlex function which (together with a pressure care mattress fitted as standard) is designed to offer maximum patient comfort.

Explained Senior Theatre Practitioner Nino Ocampo: 'The stretcher is great – the surgeons really like it. From my point of view, it is very easy to move and position – it is the first time I have worked in Ophthalmics and been able to use a specially designed trolley like this.'

'The procedure is carried out under local anaesthetic, so the patient is able to get onto the trolley by themselves in the anaesthetic room. We then wheel them into theatre for their procedure, and afterwards they can get off the trolley by themselves, which means less manual handling.'

Before moving to Northwich Senior Theatre Practitioner Binu John had worked in Ophthalmics at Leighton Hospital and also likes the features available on the Ophthalmics Stretcher.

'We know the surgeons are happy with the access and the specially designed headrest – and we find it very easy to move the whole trolley with the powered functions. It is very useful to be able to operate these from the foot end of the trolley as well as via the handset – but the biggest benefit is the fact that there are no patient transfers. From a manual handling point of view that is good for patients and for staff.'



Senior Theatre Practitioner Binu John demonstrates the foot end control panel

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