

# **NHS Lothian hospitals to feature in BBC Two documentary**

**The BBC Two medical documentary series *Surgeons: At the Edge of Life* returns on Wednesday evening (26 February, 9pm) and for the first time is set in Scotland.**

These programmes are not for the faint hearted, but they offer an insight into the innovative surgeries taking place in Edinburgh and the Lothians, a region with a long and proud history in the field of medicine.

Filmed at leading centres of medical excellence – NHS Lothian's The Royal Infirmary, The Western General, and St. Johns – the series gives viewers unprecedented access to surgeons, anaesthetists, theatre staff and patients.

Consultant Hepato-Biliary Surgeon Rajan Ravindran takes on complex procedures involving the liver, pancreas, and gallbladder. In the opening episode, he performs a joint case with Consultant Transplant Surgeons, Andrew Sutherland and John Casey. This is a case that has only been performed in Scotland three times before.

Their patient is 21-year-old Sania, whose acute recurrent pancreatitis means she has been living in pain for ten years. The inflammation of her pancreas has caused toxic substances to get into her bloodstream. Without an operation, her pancreas will eventually be destroyed. The operation will

remove her pancreas and involve extracting insulin and hormone-producing cells, called islets, and transplanting them into her liver. The cells will then continue to produce insulin and hormones. The procedure, known as an auto-transplant, is high-risk. Once the pancreas is removed, there is a race against time. A specialist lab outside Edinburgh is one of only three in the UK that can carry out the extraction process. As the scientists work on the pancreas, Rajan must reconstruct Sania's digestive tract.

At the Western General Hospital, Consultant Urological Surgeon Alex Laird's patient also has a lot to lose. Sixty-one-year-old Ed, who cares for his wife full-time, has kidney cancer. The tumour has spread from the kidney through Ed's two renal veins and into the largest vein in the body, the inferior vena cava (IVC). If a fragment of tumour were to break off, it would travel to the heart and lungs causing a fatal embolism – and without an operation, Ed may not survive more than a year. Because of the tumour's growth, the operation is highly complex. Alex must shut off the blood flow in the IVC, open the vessel and coax the tumour back into the renal vein. Repeating the process for the other renal vein also means closing the blood flow from Ed's healthy kidney. Alex and Consultant Anaesthetist Rosie Baruah must also deal with a dangerous drop in Ed's blood pressure and a haemorrhage.

Running for six episodes, the series begins on Wednesday 26 February, 9pm on BBC Two and will also be shown from Monday 3 March, at 9pm on BBC Scotland. All episodes will also be available on BBC iPlayer.

Tracey Gillies, Medical Director and General Surgeon, NHS Lothian said, "We are delighted to be featured in the upcoming series of *Surgeons: At the Edge of Life*. I would like to thank our patients and their families for sharing their stories and in doing so, bringing hope and inspiration to others who may be facing similar medical challenges. I would also like to thank our staff and the production team for the parts they

have played in making this important documentary.”

The series is made by Dragonfly Film and Television Productions for BBC Two, BBC Scotland and iPlayer. It was commissioned by BBC Factual and BBC Scotland.



Ravi Ravindran takes on a complex procedure



Andrew Sutherland and others at a case meeting