

Skin cancer is under the microscope as doctor promotes a one-stop op

● **SKIN DEEP:** Katie Baldwin reports on a doctor's mission to ensure patients know about a highly effective cancer treatment.

FOR many cancer patients, surgery can't always fully remove all trace of the disease.

But for sufferers of certain types of facial skin cancers, a specialised technique means they can be sure the whole of their cancer has gone – and that they are left with the smallest possible scar.

'Mohs' surgery involves removing the affected area and then examining it under the microscope immediately.

The surgeon can see whether all the cancer has been extracted and if not, takes away another layer of skin.

However consultant dermatologist Dr Walayat Hussain, who works at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and for Spire Leeds Hospital, wants more patients to realise that Mohs is available.

"When dealing with skin cancer, what you see on the skin can be just the tip of the iceberg," he said.

"Mohs surgery enables all the roots of the skin cancer to be very precisely removed and by only removing cancerous tissue and sparing normal skin, it can often offer an improved cosmetic result and may work where other treatments have failed."

Patient Margery Benn needed surgery after lesions on her face were found to be skin cancer.

"They were not painful but they were unsightly and they would not heal," the 74-year-old said.

"It was only when I saw another dermatologist who suggested they were cancerous and would keep growing that I became concerned and was referred for Mohs surgery, which I had never heard of."

The retired director was treated through Spire Leeds Hospital under her health insurance, though she had the procedure at Chapel Allerton Hospital in Leeds as a day case.

She was delighted with the results.

"Dr Hussain assured me the swelling and redness would fade within a week – and it did," said Mrs Benn, from Wetherby.

"The treatment I received was exceptional and I would certainly recommend it to others with a similar condition."

"My family and friends are amazed at the way the scar has healed."

Dr Hussain said the area had already been treated previously.

"It was initially thought to be an area of sun damage, however she actually had a basal cell carcinoma, which is the commonest type of skin cancer and related to sun exposure," he said.



● **SKIN CANCER SUCCESS STORY:** Margery Benn and, below, Mohs surgery specialist Dr Walayat Hussain.

"The surgery was challenging given that she had previously been treated, causing the skin cancer roots to be buried deeper in the skin."

American surgeon Dr Frederic Mohs, who

gave his name to the technique, pioneered it in the 1930s and 40s.

It is used mainly for the treatment of facial skin cancers which are not melanomas and is available on the NHS and to private patients at Chapel Allerton Hospital in Leeds.

Currently two surgeons, including Dr Hussain, can offer the treatment but a third is being recruited to meet demand linked to the rising levels of skin cancer.

Dr Hussain said that firstly, the visible part of the skin cancer is removed and analysed under the microscope.

"If any roots of the skin cancer remain the precise location of these roots is marked and another layer of skin is then removed precisely where the cancer was seen."

"After all of the cancer cells are removed I will then reconstruct the wound endeavouring to provide the best cosmetic outcome possible."

"Mohs surgery is considered the 'gold-standard' treatment for non-melanoma skin cancers when it is felt there is a high risk of the cancer returning and especially when the skin cancer is on the face as it allows the hole to be kept as small as possible."

"This is particularly important around the eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Take the lips for example, it's vital that a patient's ability to open their mouth, eat, smile and speak are not affected."



Despite the success of the technique, and though it is growing in popularity in the UK, still relatively few doctors have the specialist training to carry it out.

"It's been available in Leeds for 10 years but people don't know about its benefits, especially given that the incidence of skin cancer has

grown," said Dr Hussain, who is accredited by the world-leading American College of Mohs Surgery.

"It's not very well advertised and people don't know about it."

Patients who may need the treatment are referred by their doctor, but research by Dr Hussain has found that knowledge of Mohs among GPs is not very good and it was important everyone was aware of it.

"I have treated patients as young as 18 with Mohs surgery and that's why it's so important to raise awareness of this treatment amongst doctors and the public alike."

"I say to patients with skin cancer that they are getting a guarantee that it's all gone at the time of surgery and the hole you are left with is the smallest hole you need to remove the cancer."

● **Visit www.yorkshiremohs.com.**
TWITTER: @KATIEBALDWINYEP
EMAIL: KATIE.BALDWIN@YPN.CO.UK

Phil is back on song after heart surgery

A SONGWRITER has found success after he regained his creativity following treatment for heart problems.

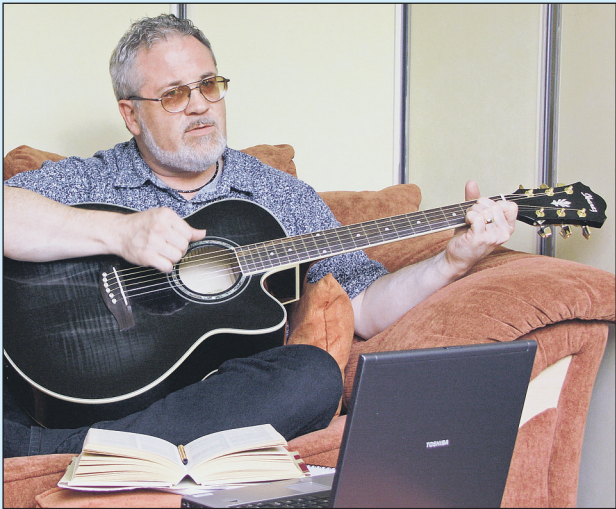
Leeds-born Phil Maybury was taken into Leeds General Infirmary in December 2011 with an uncontrollable, irregular and very fast heart rate.

"I'd had problems with arrhythmia for over 10 years and it always had an impact on my life," he said.

"When it deteriorated I became weak and lacked energy, my thinking was sluggish and my confidence collapsed. I lost my creativity and my memory became foggy."

After two catheter ablation procedures, he has marked his recovery with nine successful songs in the UK Songwriting Contest 2012, adding to his string of previous successes.

In the contest two entries were semi-finalists and seven more were commended – including *Workhorse Life*, which was a semi-finalist in one category, and



● **REGAINING HIS FOCUS:** Singer-songwriter Phil Maybury

commended in another.

"After the ablation, my ability to focus was restored, my thinking cleared and my creativity and inspiration returned," he said.

"Since then I've begun to expand my catalogue of songs, enter competitions both in the

UK and across the Atlantic, and promote my work to an increasing number of followers around the world, as well as planning towards future live performances. I'm indebted to the team at LGI for their support through this process." Log on to www.philmaybury.com.

A NEW LOOK YORKSHIRE EVENING POST

NEXT WEEK
Health moves to
Tuesdays as part
of your new 'Style'
supplement