

# PHAROS

*A beacon of hope in the darkness*

*Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)*

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## THE DECEMBER 2023 MEETING

The December meeting was our Christmas Social held in the church hall. The event was a buffet meal served by a new contractor for us, called Little Platters. The event was well attended and the attractions of a raffle and a quiz were greatly appreciated. The raffle raised a surplus of £267 that helped towards our fixed costs of our events.

## THE JANUARY 2024 MEETING

The January meeting was an Open Meeting that did not have a guest speaker. Our occasional Open Meetings are a great opportunity to chat with other members about almost anything. It was well attended and positive feedback from members was such that we will consider arranging more of these meetings during 2024.

## THE FEBRUARY 2024 MEETING

The February meeting featured an excellent talk by Mr Andre Joshi. Andre is a Consultant Urologist from Brisbane who has come to the Royal Berkshire Hospital for 12 months as part of an exchange programme between Brisbane and the RBH. He is one of four Australian consultants who have visited the UK performing fellowships specifically to learn surgical techniques as the number of patients is far higher and they can perfect their knowledge far quicker than they can in Australia.

The slides that he presented will be available in the RPCSG web site, so please refer to these for details, whilst the following is a summary of his talk and other facts that he gave. He discussed prostate cancer and treatments, and contrasted the pathways in Australia with those in the UK.

The UK has a population of about 67.3 million people which is about 2.6 times as many as Australia where there are 25.7 million people. By population the two countries have a similar occurrence of prostate cancer diagnoses. He showed a graph of the 5-year survival that has steadily improved over the last 28 years. During that time we have become better in several areas such as diagnosis and early detection, treatments including robotic surgery and better radiotherapy, better imaging and staging, and better outcomes.



*Andre during his talk*

Andre said in the UK about 20% of treatments are through private health care whereas in Australia it is greater than 45%, and there is too much competition between insurance providers. The UK has well defined pathways but in Australia there are no real pathways and

the time from investigation to treatment is much shorter in the UK. This is mainly due to a longer waiting period in Australia between each stage of investigation to treatment.

Robotic surgery is widely available in the NHS but there are few robots in Australia due to the number needed and the experience required by the surgeons.

There is no prostate cancer screening program in either the UK or Australia but a small screening trial found that it resulted in a significant improvement in mortality reduction. It is suggested that men with a family history of prostate cancer should have PSA testing every two years from the age of around 40 to 45 years.

Trans Perineal (TP) biopsies have dramatically increased, replacing Trans Rectal (TR) biopsies. TP biopsy is able to reach more areas of the prostate gland than TR and has a lower rate of infection.

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is increasingly used for diagnosis and provides guidance for biopsies. Other imaging techniques such as PSMA are providing greater accuracy in diagnosis and treatments.

Andre then described the improvements in treatments over the last more than 100 years, during which there has been a movement away from open prostatectomies and towards robotic assisted, also improvements in drug treatments.

Andre predicted some future developments:

- Precision personalised medicine to treat targetable tumoral aberrations
- Hypofractionated radiotherapy enabling shorter treatment duration.
- More robotic machines – a development being the multi-tool arm that needs only one insertion point, with the tools opening out once the arm is inside the body.
- Theranostics (the use of drugs to identify and deliver radioactivity directly to tumour cells).

Andre was thanked for his excellent talk and was presented with a gift of appreciation.

## THE SUMMER SOCIAL

Our Summer Social will be at St Andrew's Hall on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July.

Your committee has started work on planning this event for you, and it would be very useful for us to have an idea of numbers attending.

Would members please a) pop the date into your diary and b) let me know, ideally by email ([alexbmiles@aol.com](mailto:alexbmiles@aol.com)) of your intention to attend, including any partners/guests you plan to bring. This will greatly assist your committee in planning the event.

We are hoping to keep the cost no higher than our Christmas Social last year, which was £30/head. No money is needed at this stage – just numbers attending.

Thanks for your support.

Alex Miles  
Social Secretary

## **RPCSG WALKS AND COFFEE MORNINGS**

We did not hold a December walk as it would have been too close to Christmas, but walks took place in January and February.

*Some photographs taken during the February walk at Dinton Pastures:*



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