

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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Website: www.rpcsg.org.uk

THE AUGUST MEETING

In August we had both the monthly meeting on the 1st, and the Summer Social on the 7th August.

The monthly meeting had 46 people attending including three new members. It had been planned that the meeting would be a presentation by a radiologist, but unfortunately the person could not be present on the evening. The audience instead was shown several videos that are available in the internet. The videos comprised animations of prostatectomies, and others giving some general information on treatments including hormone treatment. The videos were found to be very interesting, and prompted a lot of questions and comments by members of the audience. Several felt that they learned things that they wished had been known earlier in their treatment experience. However we must remember that it is not essential for patients to know the mechanics of surgery and treatments, but it is essential to understand risks and side effects, which is admirably achieved at RBH.

If you found the videos interesting, you can visit the 'Library' page of our web site where you will find a link that will take you to these and many more videos covering the whole subject of prostate cancer and treatments.

It is intended to have the radiologist talk at one of our meetings early in 2015.

THE SUMMER SOCIAL

The Summer Social was a huge success, with 56 people participating. The venue at the Calcot Hotel was most suitable, and had been attractively decorated with balloons

and streamers by the committee members. The two course buffet meal offering both hot and cold food was very good, and an enjoyable quiz was won by a table that scored 26 correct answers out of 30 questions. A raffle was held and this contributed a useful amount of money for the group's funds of about £116, in spite of the suspicion that one table had earlier drunk one of the prizes!

Our thanks are due to the committee members who put much effort into the arrangements and organisation of the Summer Social, and also to our Chairman Steve Allen for his magnificent job of hosting the evening and making it a most enjoyable occasion.

MACMILLAN WELLBEING : A MEMBER'S FOLLOW-UP

Following the presentation by three Macmillan representatives at the June meeting concerning their Wellbeing programme, our member David Priest, who manages the membership and badges for RPCSG, followed up their presentation and is now taking part in the scheme. He has provided the following information about this, to let us all know how it worked out for him.

David lives near to Newbury and hoped that there would be a facility closer than Reading. He found that Well-being sessions had recently started up at the Northcroft Leisure Centre in Newbury that is quite convenient for him. Macmillan emailed some details to David, including that fact that sessions are held on Tuesdays starting mid-morning and finishing around mid-day (12:00 to 12:15 is the typical finishing time). The sessions are free. David first attended for a discrete fact-

finding assessment, that established such things as the nature of the illness, and personal limitations.

He then attended his first session, whose objectives are to increase blood flow, and improve mental and physical aspects. There is also opportunity for social interaction with other participants, who have a variety of cancer illnesses. There is a group personal fitness instructor to advise on exercise to obtain the optimum benefit from the equipment available. The equipment is set out on one of the courts, and includes cycling machines, step-ups and weight training aids. Complimentary vouchers are available for other activities including swimming, outside the class sessions. There were about 12 or so other people at the session.

The sessions are growing in popularity and it is likely that additional sessions will be started to accommodate the demand.

WEB SITE NEWS

Laurie Fineman has done a magnificent job over several months, in getting our web site set up and populated, and the committee is very grateful to him. The web site is a great way of having information easily available to all, and an encouragement to anyone thinking of joining the group.

Unfortunately Laurie is soon moving away from the area, leaving us in need of a web site manager to take over the role of maintaining the web site. If anyone would like to take on this job the committee will be most grateful. It is not a difficult job and only needs a little ability with computers, and some artistic flair will help. It could even be a useful additional skill to acquire. Laurie will continue to manage the web site for up to 12 months, and he is very willing to spend some time with anyone taking on board this job, for tuition in the methods. Please contact the Chairman if you would like to become the RPCSG web site manager.

MORE ON VASECTOMIES

In the July issue I mentioned the possible link between vasectomy and aggressive prostate cancer. Prostate Cancer UK has since carried out an investigation of its own,

under the banner of 'Behind The Headlines'. I always have more faith in the information provided by PCUK. They summarised the report as saying that there was no link between having a vasectomy and developing non-aggressive localised prostate cancer. But they did find that there was a 22 per cent increased relative risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer for men who had had a vasectomy compared to men who had not.

The increased risk seems to be quite large, but in context, it means that 17 out of 1,000 men who did not have a vasectomy developed aggressive prostate cancer, compared to 19 out of 1,000 men developing aggressive prostate cancer who did have a vasectomy.

PCUK points out that another important thing about this research is that although it shows us a link between having a vasectomy and having aggressive prostate cancer, it can't and doesn't tell us that one causes the other, or why the link is there. They said that "We would need a different type of research to understand that. Deciding whether or not to have a vasectomy is highly personal, and should be discussed with a GP. We don't think men need to be too concerned about these results at this stage". You can read their full report on this web page:

<http://prostatecanceruk.org/news/2014/7/behind-the-headlines-vasectomy>

FUTURE MEETINGS

The 5th September meeting will feature a talk by Diane Wootton, who is a physiotherapist working closely with RBH, and a specialist in incontinence and the pelvic floor.

The 3rd October meeting will have a presentation by Dr. Fawaz Musa, who is a histopathologist at the RBH, and he will be telling us about the specialist work carried out in his unit.

The 7th November meeting will feature a talk by Dr. Helen O'Donnell, a leading oncologist at RBH.

Please visit the RPCSG web site shortly before each meeting, as there you will find

the most up-to-date information on future meetings.

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