

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE JANUARY MEETING

There was quite a good attendance of 21 people at the January 2015 meeting. It was a good opportunity to meet and chat with other members. Thank you to the members who attended, and also to the ladies for arranging the refreshments.

TWO OUT OF THREE CANCERS ARE CAUSED BY BAD LUCK

On the 1st January 2015 there was much media coverage of some findings published by the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Centre in the United States. This report was also featured on the main BBC TV news. The media headlines were along the lines of 'most cancers are due to bad luck'. The report claimed that two thirds of cancers are caused by random mutations during cell division and so cannot be avoided. In the other third of cancers, genetic inheritance and lifestyle are the main factors and the risk of these cancers can be reduced, by such things as maintaining a healthy diet and weight, taking exercise, not smoking and avoiding excessive exposure to the sun.

The authors said that the 'bad luck' theory was confirmed by findings that the quantity of cancers cases was in proportion to the cell division rate. For example, the cell division rate in a colon is four times greater than that in a small intestine, and the cancer occurrence rate is similarly higher than that of the small intestine. A higher rate of cell division means that there is a greater chance of random mutations and hence the development of 'bad luck' cancer.

The scientists claim that because it is impossible to prevent most types of cancer through behavioural changes or genetic screening, more should be done to speed up

diagnosis so they can be detected as early as possible, and a spokesperson from Cancer Research UK said that "It's vital that we continue making progress to detect cancer earlier and improve treatments." The scientists claim that changing our lifestyle dramatically may not be as effective as we thought because of the influence 'bad luck' has on the overall outcome. But doctors said that poor health and lifestyle choices still contribute to the development of cancer and should not be ignored. They warn that poor lifestyle can add to the "bad luck factor" involved in cancer.

The first media reports appeared to relate to all cancers, but it emerged in a later BBC TV news report, and in an updated article in the Guardian on the 2nd January 2015, that the Johns Hopkins report did not include the two very common cancers of breast and prostate. The reason given for this omission was that the report relied on analysis of the normal division rate of cells, and this data was not available to them for breast and prostate glands.

So unfortunately the report does not further our understanding of prostate cancer risks and we do not know where it would feature on the 'bad luck' scale. However we should continue to lead a healthy lifestyle, as an adverse lifestyle can increase the risk of cancer.

There are many articles giving advice on how to reduce the risk of contracting prostate cancer, one such being the following web page of the Prostate Cancer Foundation:

<http://www.pcf.org/site/c.1eJRIROrEpH/b.5802029/k.31EA/Prevention.htm>

If you would like to read more about the bad luck factor, you can find more detail in these two web pages:

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/02/two-thirds-adult-cancers-bad-luck>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/11320497/Most-cancers-are-caused-by-bad-luck-not-genes-or-lifestyle-say-scientists.html>

ISSUE 5 OF PCUK PROGRESS MAGAZINE

The charity Prostate Cancer UK has now released issue 5 of its excellent magazine called Progress. You can read issue 5 at the link below:

http://prostatecanceruk.org/media/2491260/3062_progress-issue-5-web.pdf

NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting is on Friday 6th February, when there will be a talk given by Janet from the Uro-Oncology unit at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, about new oral chemotherapy that is used for prostate cancer, and the clinics that have been set up to monitor patients.

The March meeting will include the AGM, which will not be very long, and we may be able to arrange a guest speaker or other event for the remainder of the meeting.

Please visit the website shortly before each meeting where information of the latest arrangements for the meetings can be found.

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