

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

Issue 57: March 2016

Website: www.rpcsg.org.uk

THE MARCH MEETING

The March meeting had a good attendance of 49 people, and started with the AGM. The AGM followed the previously distributed agenda. Keith Hunt, the Treasurer, explained the accounts position, which had been verified by a qualified accountant. In summary, our outgoings exceeded income by £313.11, partly due to lower donations than last year, although we still have a healthy bank balance of £3165.86.

Graham Cook made his final appearance as Chairman, having completed a four year term in the committee. Ted Goodhew was elected as new Chairman, and thanked Graham for his work. Ted presented gifts for both Graham and his wife, as tokens of appreciation for all their work for the group.

Three new members recently joined the committee, namely Chris Addison, Steve Smyth and Frank Jiggins, and a warm welcome was expressed to these three. Frank volunteered for, and was elected to, the post of Awareness Officer, for which thanks were given.

The minutes of the AGM will appear in our web site later.

Following the AGM, Beverley Skelton and Tessa Martin gave a talk on their backgrounds and matters concerning prostate cancer. An open questions-and-answers session followed.

Tessa commenced by saying that she has been a Clinical Nurse Specialist for four years. Prostate cancer has the biggest incidence of cases, others including cancer of kidney, penile, testicular and bladder.

Some time ago the post of Support Worker was introduced, with some of the workers being provided by Macmillan. The Support Workers enable the specialist nurses to spend more time in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer sufferers. Subsequently the Support Worker concept has been adopted in other teams as well.

Some recent developments in urology include the use of mpMRI pre biopsy. This may avoid a biopsy, or can reveal areas of suspicion that can be investigated.

There have been an increasing number of trials carried out, a well-known one being the ambitious Stampede trial. Trials can provide valuable information and can lead to new drugs or treatments being introduced.

The amount of information available to assist in the decision on treatment, is increasing, and enables better-informed decisions to be made. Outcomes of diagnosis can be delivered by a telephone call, or by personal visit. The latter is preferable where both people of a couple want to be involved.

Radium 223 is increasingly used to treat metastasis.

In response to questions, the following further information emerged:

Hormone treatment usually precedes chemotherapy, but recently the use of the hormone Docetaxel is being used at the outset, for men for whom surgery or brachytherapy is not appropriate. Also the two drugs Abiraterone and Enzalutamide are being used with better effect before chemotherapy, rather than the traditional use of only after chemotherapy.

Some use of Docetaxel has been made before surgery.

Most treatments have their own side effects, and generally men are reluctant to discuss these. To try to mitigate side effects, treatments are given individually rather than several at a time - this enables treatments to be tailored to the individual, therefore side effects can be better identified and managed. In the past there has been little research into side effects, but research in this area is expanding, in particular into the biggest side effect, which is hot flushes that can be caused by as little as one tablet of hormone treatment. Both hormones and chemotherapy can cause depression, and so a psychologist has joined the team at RBH.

Beverley and Tessa were thanked for their interesting talk, and presented with a bouquet of flowers each as a token of appreciation.

JOHN LEWIS DONATION

We supplied the John Lewis Partnership with a variety of printed information and other support, for their prostate cancer awareness session at the John Lewis Distribution Centre in Theale. Following the event, the partnership made a donation to our group of £153 plus a further £191 from a raffle. We are very grateful to the John Lewis Partnership for their interest in our group and for the many donations that they have made in the past. The following photograph shows the presentation of a cheque to our committee members David Priest and Graham Cook:



Left to right: David Priest and Graham Cook receiving a donation from the John Lewis Partnership.

A PHOTOGRAPHER IN OUR MIDST

Several photographs that I have used in previous newsletters, were taken by Steve Smyth, who is a professional photographer, and was elected at the AGM as a committee member. Steve has taken some very useful photographs, and intends to continue photographing at our group meetings, our social and other events. Steve offers many types of photographic services, including wedding and other events. Steve will be most pleased to be commissioned to take a photographic record of any such event. If you would like to engage him for any occasion, he will be most pleased to hear from you. Steve can be contacted on stevesmythpics@hotmail.com or by phone on 07381 637577. Steve is local to Reading, but will travel to any location.

NEW ISSUE OF INSIGHTS

The charity Prostate Cancer UK issues an excellent magazine. It used to be called 'Progress', but had to change its name for technical reasons, and is now called 'Insights'. It is issued twice per year and issue number 7 has just been published. It can be read at this web page:

http://prostatecanceruk.org/media/2493166/3762-insights-issue-7_2.pdf

As usual, it contains some very interesting articles concerning prostate cancer, including details of the MenUnited fund raising activity. This issue also includes a very good article about biomarkers for diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer.

The magazine has a very high degree of confidence in prostate cancer being overcome within 10 years, and describes their strategy for achieving this.

PAST EVENTS

On the 18th March 2016 we held a prostate cancer awareness stand at the Broad Street Mall in Reading. We were fortunate to have our favourite spot allocated - at the foot of the escalators. We recorded our contacts with the public (either a discussion, or the giving out of printed information) and the

total number of contacts was 305 people. This is a big increase in the number of contacts of 228 made last year. A rewarding thought is that these contacts may just save the life of one or more men.



Some members manning the awareness stand on the morning shift.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1st APRIL 2016

The April group meeting is in St Andrews church hall at 6:30 p.m. There will be a guest speaker, Dr Boulos, who has been a local GP for many years and has recently retired.

6th May 2016

The May meeting of the RPCSG will be visited by Mandy Holdstock of Charter Health Care, who will advise on a range of products to help deal with incontinence.

3rd June 2016

The June meeting will have a return of Dr. Fawaz Musa, a histopathologist at the RBH, who will explain the work that his unit carries out.

25th June 2016

We will be running an awareness stand at the Woodley Pagoda on Saturday 25th June. Volunteers will be very much appreciated to man this stand on a rota basis.

Steve Parkinson
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