

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE JUNE MEETING

The guest speakers at the June meeting were Karen Wilmot and Georgina Bird, who are both specialist nurses at RBH (Royal Berkshire Hospital).

Karen described the Prostate School that is run at the RBH for men, in advance of a prostatectomy, to help to improve the outcome of the surgery. The School is usually held once per week, dependent upon the demand. She explained the need for a catheter that will be in place for several days after surgery, and that there will be some degree of incontinence and problems with erectile ability. These side effects usually subside after about six months, but can take up to a year.

Pelvic floor exercises can reduce the side effects of surgery, and can be carried out both pre and post surgery. The exercise consists of tighten the anal sphincter muscle, as if trying to prevent passing gas, and also tightening the urinary sphincter as though trying to stop a urine flow. You should try to hold these muscles contracted for 5 seconds initially, then build up until they can be held contracted for 10 seconds.

These contractions should be performed 3 times whilst lying down, then 3 times whilst sitting, and then 3 times whilst standing. This sequence of 9 contractions should be carried out 3 times per day, spaced out during the day.

Following each set of contractions, patients should also carry out some fast contractions, to develop a 'fast response' ability. This consists of carrying out a contraction as above, but holding it for only 1 second and then waiting for 1 second, then repeated 9 times.

Karen then described the information given to patients, about the prostatectomy procedure. A diet high in carbohydrates is needed before the surgery, but patients need to fast for a time before the surgery takes place. In this waiting

time patients are given some high energy drinks.

Mobility following surgery is important, and should begin within 6 hours of surgery. Before being discharged, the Care Team will ensure that the patient has adequate transport and persons available to help at home. Pain relief, laxatives and blood thinning injections are discussed, to be used as needed.

At this point some members of the audience said that they had had shoulder pain following surgery. Karen advised that this is due to the gas that is applied inside the abdomen during surgery, and nerves in the area are connected with the shoulder.

The exercises should be carried out for life, but not as frequently as recommended earlier.

Georgina then talked about prostate trials that are being carried at present. These are:

True North.

This is a study looking at the wide range of side effects following a radical prostatectomy. It is trying to see if there is a link that will show whose outcomes are better or worse.

Stampede (Systematic Therapy in Advanced or Metastatic Prostate cancer; Evaluation of Drug Efficacy).

This is a study run by the Berkshire Cancer Centre looking at the effects of adding new or different treatments to the standard treatments for prostate cancer. This will include the effects of the drug Metformin, following indications that it may improve prostate cancer outcomes.

Add - Aspirin

This is a trial running over all cancer groups including breast, stomach, oesophagus, bowel and prostate. It is looking at the effects of aspirin on cancer. It is thought that an anti-inflammatory compound in Aspirin may help, but it is not known whether it works on all cancers or just some.

Europa.

This is not a cancer trial but is looking at a combination tablet for symptoms of LUTS (frequency, urgency, etc.)

Most of the trials are funded by Universities or pharmaceutical companies. The results are sent to those taking part and published in medical journals or on specialist sites. The RBH Research and Development team are looking at publishing all trials on a website. Some members said that they would be interested in taking part in trials, and Georgina will report this interest to the R&D team.

Karen and Georgina were thanked for an interesting and informative talk.

{Editor's notes: You should only try to stop a flow of urine a couple of times, in order to find how to use the urinary sphincter muscle. Thereafter you should not try to stop a urine flow as this could impair the sphincter muscle.

After a 10 second contraction, you should wait for 10 seconds before doing another, to give the muscles time to fully relax.}



A photograph of Karen during her talk



A photograph of Georgina during her talk

THE SUMMER SOCIAL

Our annual Summer Social will be held on the 9th August 2017, in the evening at the Calcot Hotel. There were some adverse comments following the Summer Social in 2016, particularly about the food, and these have been expressed to the management of the hotel. They have said that they will correct the cause of complaints, and make extra effort this year to provide a satisfying occasion.

As this year is our 10th anniversary of the founding of the group, the committee has decided to mark this occasion by subsidising part of the cost, and reduce the cost to members to only £10 per person. The number of places is limited, so if you would like to attend the Summer Social, please let us know of your requirement for places soon. You can make payment at one of the group meetings, or you can post a cheque payable to 'Reading PCSG'. The contact person for reservation and payment is Graham Cook. You can contact Graham by email to confirm your requirement for places. If you prefer to make your payment by post or by bank transfer, please email Graham for details:

graham.cook125@btinternet.com

The evening will consist of a hot and cold buffet meal, a raffle and a quiz.

DOES SUGAR FEED CANCER?

Many people believe that sugar feeds cancerous cells. It is easy to jump to this conclusion as we know that cells need sugar (or rather the glucose that is derived from it) to survive, and as cancer cells need more glucose to survive and grow, it seems logical that more sugar will feed and increase the cancer cells.

Should we all cut out as much sugar as possible? An excellent article by Cancer Research UK has said that the concern over sugar is largely a myth, and explains the theory and reasons behind it. However there is an indirect link between sugar and cancer, in that consuming more sugar can lead to being overweight or obese, both of which increase the risk of 13 different types of cancer. Obesity is the single biggest preventable cause of cancer in the UK after smoking. Hence reducing sugar intake will not directly reduce the risk of cancer, what is needed is a way of selectively stopping the supply of sugar to cancer cells but not to healthy cells, and this is a line of research.

The intake of sugar can be reduced by avoiding fizzy and energy drinks, as one serving of these contain more than the recommended daily maximum amount of added sugar in the UK.

The issue of sugar is complex, and the Cancer Research UK article is very comprehensive in its information, so I would encourage everyone to look at this web page:

[Sugar and cancer – what you need to know - Cancer Research UK - Science blog](#)

One would expect a report produced by Cancer Research UK to be definitive, however at the end of the article there are some comments casting doubts on some of the things that the article claimed. One comment challenges the claim that 'There is no evidence that following a "sugar-free" diet lowers the risk of getting cancer, or

boosts the chances of surviving if you are diagnosed', and quotes some other researchers as references. Another states that the research into whether sugar in the diet makes cancer grow more aggressively is still at an early stage and has only been carried out in mice, and not yet on people.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

7th JULY 2017

The guest speaker at the July meeting will be Christine Cowap of the Macmillan Trust. Christine is the Macmillan Engagement Lead for Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, and will talk about her role and the mutual benefit from her engagement with support groups.

4th AUGUST 2017

This will be a group meeting. Details will be available later.

9th AUGUST 2017

This is the Summer Social at the Calcot Hotel, Reading.

Steve Parkinson
Newsletter Editor.
NewsEditorRPCSG@yahoo.com

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