

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE MAY MEETING

The guest speaker at the May meeting was Michelle Hunt of the Continence Advisory Service. This service is based at the Wokingham Hospital in Barkham Road and covers the whole of Berkshire from Slough to Hungerford. Michelle showed a number of slides and described the service.

The Continence service is run by a small team consisting of 4.5 WTE (Whole Time Equivalent) Administrators, 1 WTE Paediatric Continence Nurse Specialist, and 4.3 Continence Nurse Specialists. There is the provision of continence information and products to patients and the organisation of the prescribing service through the GP. These are highly administrative, hence the high number of administrators within the service. They also provide a specialist clinic along with providing telephone support, education, a Home Delivery Service and Continence Prescription Service.

Michelle then outlined the different roles. The specialist clinics have an open referral system that can be accessed by anyone. It does not need a GP referral. These are run by the nurses and aim to improve continence levels of anyone having problems.

- The telephone support is aimed at patients, relatives and health care professionals. It provides an easy access service.
- Education; this includes talking to support groups, healthcare profession groups providing education about both bladder and bowel issues.
- Home delivery service; this has around 5000 patients on the books delivering pads and continence products.
- Continence prescription service; around 3000 patients use catheters, sheaths, pads etc. The service contacts GPs and get prescriptions for these services.

The last 2 services are very labour intensive.

Michelle then described the prostate gland and the pelvic floor muscles. She reminded the group that the role of the pelvic floor muscles was support and that women often have a problem following childbirth and men following prostate surgery. She said that carrying out pelvic floor exercises is useful both before and after treatment, to help to achieve an early return to continence. She said that it is important to do the exercises properly and not just a large number.

A question was asked about pelvic floor exercises following radiotherapy. Michelle said it is good to keep the muscles strong after any treatment. Michelle then gave a short lesson on finding the pelvic floor muscles. The muscles that need to be strengthened are those that you would use to try to stop urination during a flow. Doing these exercises on a hard chair is more effective than a soft sofa. There are 2 types of muscle, quick firing muscle and slow firing muscle. These exercises should be done 3 times day holding for 10 seconds then relax. It can take 8-12 weeks to see any improvement. There is an app called TENA that helps remind people how to do the exercises.

She then moved onto the bladder telling the group that it usually holds around 500ml. Conditions can make this smaller and having a catheter in can lead to it forgetting how to stretch leading to a smaller capacity bladder. Swelling of the ankles can be uncomfortable and if they are raised the fluid then drains through the kidney more effectively. She suggested that normal urination is 4-7 times per day for those over 65. It is also within the normal limits to get up twice per night. Fluid intake should be 1.5-2.5 litres per day and less than 1.5 can lead to an increased risk of renal failure, infections and kidney stones.

Going to the toilet 'just in case' is not always a good idea as the bladder forgets to stretch and means you always have to urinate frequently. Retraining involves hanging on

for a period of time to stretch the bladder again.

Radar keys are available for patients to buy allowing access to public toilets. The Continence Service are trying to prevent so many public toilets closing.

Michelle gave some tips on preventing urination;

- A heated seat stops the feeling of needing to urinate
- Sit down until the feeling goes away
- Stand on tip toes
- Curl toes
- Arch your back
- Stand still and squeeze the muscle

After treatment, there are some things to remember in looking after the bladder. Avoid bladder irritants, such as caffeine, citrus drinks, and blackcurrant juice. It is important to empty the bladder as completely as possible to avoid urine infections.

There are a variety of different ways of managing incontinence such as sling surgery, injectable bolstering drugs into the bladder (Botox) and the use of catheters to prevent strictures.

Finally Michelle advised of the telephone number of the Service, which is 01189 495145, and the email address of continence@berkshire.nhs.uk

Michelle was thanked for her informative talk, and presented with a gift of appreciation.



A photograph of Michelle during her talk

AWARENESS DAY 14TH JULY

We will hold a prostate cancer awareness session in the middle of Broad Street, Reading, opposite to Waterstone's shop. We will erect a gazebo and will have a display of printed material to hand out to any interested persons, both male and female. The intention is to engage in conversation with members of the public, offering them leaflets and information as appropriate. The stand will be manned from 9:00 a.m. finishing no later than 6:00 p.m. and probably earlier if the quantity of members of the public reduces.

The stand will be managed in shifts of two hours each, and we will appreciate as many volunteers as possible to help. If you can spare some time for us at this event, please contact me by email.

SUMMER SOCIAL

The summer social will be held as the August group meeting on the 3rd August 2018. It will be in St Andrews church hall, and the caterers will be Mange Bien, who have provided us with excellent food and service at previous Christmas occasions. The event will be 'Bring Your Own Drinks', alcoholic or otherwise, for your own consumption.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1st JUNE 2018

The June meeting will see Shirley Jackson as the guest speaker, of the Macmillan 'Move More' physical activity programme.

6th JULY 2018

A speaker for the July meeting is being arranged.

Continued...

14th JULY 2018

This date is a Saturday and will be an awareness day held in Broad Street Reading, near to Waterstones.

3rd AUGUST 2018

This is the date of the Summer Social, to be held from 6:30 p.m. in St Andrews church hall. Remember to bring your own drinks for your own consumption.

Steve Parkinson
Newsletter Editor.
NewsEditorRPCSG@yahoo.com

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