

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE JULY MEETING

The July meeting was attended by 31 people including two new members, to whom the Chairman expressed a particular welcome.

The Chairman reported that the awareness event at the Woodley Pagoda was very successful, with 214 recorded contacts with members of the public, who received information leaflets or discussions.

The Chairman then introduced the speaker for the evening, who was Matt Poll of Talking Therapies.

Matt started by asking the audience for any questions or topics to cover, and wrote them on a flip chart. He crossed off the topics during his talk, which was a very useful way of addressing all the topics.

Matt said that Talking Therapies is a 'brand name' for psychological help. It comprises small teams that operate out of GP surgeries and medical centres. They geographically cover from Newbury to Slough. Talking Therapies has been in existence for eight years and is funded by the NHS. Matt has been involved in psychology for 16 years. Talking Therapies has an excellent track record, and has made major improvements. They have about 50 referrals per day, of which about 30% are for depression. About 1 in 4 people will have some anxiety or depression phases during their life. Typically 50% of referrals will have problems classified as serious.

Talking Therapies operates short courses for dealing with issues.

Therapy can be delivered by telephone, or on-line, or by one-to-one meetings. To obtain help from Talking Therapies, it is usual to first approach a GP, who will then refer the patient. The waiting time is a

maximum of around 8 to 10 weeks, but most referrals are first seen within 2 to 3 weeks. One can self refer, making contact by telephone or on-line - it is not mandatory to go via a GP.

It has been found that the majority of referrals are women, and 60% of Talking Therapies' workforce are female. It is very common for patients to be accompanied by their partner or other person, e.g. people accompanying a child. Patients have a choice as to whom they see.

Much of the therapy is delivered by telephone. Home visits are unusual at present, but home visit therapy is planned for next year. Currently, in the case of very severe problems, a team will visit the patient at their home.

Matt then contrasted Talking Therapy with medications. GPs are inclined to prescribe medications, but Talking Therapies attempts to replace medication. Talking Therapies aims to cure by altering the brain's attitude, whereas medication generally attempts to make the patient relax but will not fix the source of problems.

Talking Therapies is measured on its success. Anxiety can be measured using phobic scales, and assessments can determine the progress of Talking Therapies. The success rate is 100%. A service is available in every town in England. The NHS carries out large clinical trials to establish whether Talking Therapies is more successful than medication. Matt said that medication has a success rate of about 50%, whereas Talking Therapies makes a significant improvement in more than 85% of cases.

The duration of a course of Talking Therapy depends on the extent of the problem. A case needing light intervention can be delivered by telephone in about 6 sessions of

one hour each, in conjunction with reading material sent by post. For people using the one-to-one option, most people would have 8 to 10 sessions, with a maximum of 16 sessions. When a patient is accompanied by a partner, typically 4 sessions of about 1½ hours each is sufficient.

Matt said there are different options for therapy type, and a patient can move between these types should they wish to do so. The types are:

- Group sessions, in which a person can say as much or as little as they prefer.
- Small groups. These tend to involve more sharing of experiences, and to be more supportive in nature.
- One-to-one sessions. These are private, and more open in nature.

Matt said that he is willing to speak directly with any group member who wishes to contact him, and he advised me of his personal mobile number. If anyone would like to take advantage of this kind offer, please email me to obtain the number.

Matt concluded by giving details of how to contact Talking Therapies. You can visit this web page:

<http://www.talkingtherapies.berkshire.nhs.uk>

From there you can do a local search on the phrase 'Stress Control', or 'Self Refer'. Alternatively Talking Therapies can be contacted on the telephone number 0300 3652000.

Matt was thanked for his very useful talk, and presented with a gift of appreciation.



A photograph of Matt during his talk

HIGH DOSE RADIOTHERAPY HAS SEVERAL BENEFITS

A major new study has suggested that a shorter course of higher dose radiotherapy for prostate cancer is as effective as the current standard treatment, and has several advantages. The study took place over a period of 14 years, following 3,200 men at more than 70 research centres across the UK. It has been published in the 'The Lancet Oncology'. The shorter course uses a higher dose of radiotherapy, that is given over a fewer number of sessions. The number of radiotherapy sessions is reduced from 37 to 20, having several benefits. The number of hospital visits by the patient is reduced, thus making it more convenient for the patient, and would save the NHS tens of millions of pounds in costs. After five years, the higher dose regime is not inferior to the standard treatment in either effectiveness or quality of life.

The trial also showed that treatment with fewer, higher doses of intensity-modulated radiotherapy, were associated with less than half the rate of side-effects than with older conformal radiotherapy.

You can read more about this treatment at several web pages. The following two pages are informative:

<http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/681673/prostate-cancer-new-study-support-higher-doses-radiotherapy>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/20/prostate-cancer-treatment-could-work-in-half-the-time-and-without/>

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

5th AUGUST 2016

This group meeting will be an 'Open Session' at which everyone will have an opportunity to talk to other members, particularly those who have undergone the same treatment as yourself.

24th August 2016

This is the date for our popular Summer Social at the Calcot Hotel in Reading. It is an evening event with a hot and cold buffet meal with vegetarian options, and a choice of two desserts. Also a quiz and raffle.

2nd SEPTEMBER 2016

This group meeting will have a talk by Susan Tyne, whose subject will include the role of exercise and Pilates in relation to prostate cancer.

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