

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE OCTOBER MEETING

56 people attended the October meeting, at which there was an interesting talk by Kate Slater of the Macmillan trust.

Kate talked about the State Benefits that are available, including some that may be payable as a consequence of cancer treatment. People who are still working can claim Sick Pay, Sickness Benefit, and possibly Working Tax Credit. Also a Macmillan grant could be available.

Anyone who is of working age and working and paying National Insurance contributions can claim sick pay of £88.45 per week. Also contractual sick pay can be claimed but is only paid for 28 weeks, after which one can claim Employment Support Allowance based on N.I. contributions. During the 28 weeks you can also claim Working Tax Credits. Employment Support Allowance is means tested but if you are entitled, you can claim help with rent, and after 13 weeks you can receive help with mortgage and council tax.

Travel expenses to hospital appointments can be claimed, normally for travel by public transport.

If you are classed as disabled, then Disability Benefits are available. To qualify for disability Benefits you have to have been disabled for 3 months and likely to be disabled for the next 9 months. For those under 65 there is the Personal Independence Payment. Disability Benefits are likely if a person has difficulty moving around, is unsafe, or has difficulty in looking after themselves, such as cooking, dressing, bathing etc. Other benefits are Attendance Allowance, which may be payable if you are 65 or over and you have a physical disability (including sensory disability, e.g. blindness), a mental disability (including learning

difficulties), or both and your disability is severe enough for you to need help caring for yourself or someone to supervise you, for your own or someone else's safety; and Carer's Allowance if you look after someone with substantial caring needs. You don't have to be related to, or live with, the person you care for, but you must be 16 or over and spend at least 35 hours a week caring for them. Carer's Allowance is taxable and may affect your other benefits. The Blue Badge scheme helps you to park closer to your destination if you are disabled. There is an automatic entitlement to a Blue Badge if you receive a mobility element of Personal Independence Payment, otherwise the Local Authority may consider your application under an assessed eligibility criterion. This may result in them authorising a Blue Badge. However, if there is any doubt, they make a request that you attend a local office to undergo a Mobility Assessment, before a decision is reached.

Anyone living alone and with a disability benefit but no carer's allowance, may be entitled to Severe Disability Premium.

Kate then described some examples of typical family situations and the benefits that could apply.

In reply to some questions from the audience, Kate said:

Ask Macmillan for a referral and help with claiming Pension Benefit.

There is no limit to the number of allowances that can be claimed, but you cannot claim SSP (Statutory Sick Pay) and Employee Support Allowance together, and Working Tax Credit is only payable while receiving SSP.

Prostate cancer patient should have been advised that prescriptions are free even if under the age of 60.

Macmillan deals with benefits and the Citizens Advice Bureau deals with other matters e.g. debt and homelessness.

Kate was thanked for her presentation, and was presented with a bouquet of flowers as a token of appreciation.

RECENT REPORT - YOUNGER MEN IN PERIL AS GPs REFUSE PSA TESTS

A recent newspaper article has highlighted an issue in that many GPs do not understand that men under the age of 50 can be susceptible to prostate cancer, and refuse the test as being unnecessary.

An article featured a man from Ascot whose family had a history of prostate cancer, and he had been advised by an oncologist to have PSA tests after the age of 40. Shortly after achieving 40 years of age, he asked his GP for a test but was refused, the GP claiming that it was not necessary at his age, and to return at a later age, but without defining that age. Two years later at the age of 42 he saw a different GP, who agreed to the test. His PSA was double the figure that it should have been for his age, and then tests confirmed that he had prostate cancer.

A man's risk is three times greater if his brother had prostate cancer and about double if his father, grandfather, uncle or nephew had it.

When it comes to testing, GPs follow guidelines set out in the Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme. Introduced in 2002, this states: 'Any man over the age of 50 who asks for a PSA test after careful consideration of the implications should be given one.' and so GPs are inclined to refuse tests for anyone less than the age of 50.

Unfortunately, The UK National Screening Committee reviewed the evidence for a screening programme in 2010 and recommended against it.

You can read the article at this web page: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3261076/Left-peril-men-told-young-prostate-test.html>

PCUK SURVEY - AN UPDATE

In the July 2015 edition of the newsletter I reported on a nationwide survey that the charity Prostate Cancer UK was about to hold. On their website that have said that questionnaires for this survey should be arriving to chosen patients on or after the 16th October 2015. As I mentioned in July, this is a very large scale and important survey, so if you receive one of these would you please make sure to complete it accurately and return it to them. The objective of this survey is to transform how health services support patients, and bring about any necessary changes.

You can read more about this survey at the following web page, which contains a link to some commonly asked questions:

<http://prostatecanceruk.org/about-us/news-and-views/2015/10/first-surveys-sent-in-groundbreaking-study>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

THE NOVEMBER GROUP MEETING

The speaker at the meeting of 6th November will be Keith Cass, who is the founder member of the Red Socks Campaign. He will talk about 'Living Well With Prostate Cancer' including the side effects from hormone therapy and IADT (Intermittent Androgen Deprivation Therapy).

THE DECEMBER GROUP MEETING

The meeting on the 4th December will be our annual Christmas Social buffet meal, which is always a very popular and enjoyable event. More detail of this occasion will be available later.

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