

# PHAROS

*A beacon of hope in the darkness*

*Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)*

*Issue 31: December 2013*

*Website now open at: [www.rpcsg.org.uk](http://www.rpcsg.org.uk)*

## **EDITOR'S FOREWORD.**

Excellent news this month is that the RPCSG web site is now live. The committee would like to give its sincere thanks to Laurie, who has set up and populated this site, and organised several committee reviews of draft versions. He has put a lot of work into the site over several months, and has created an excellent site. Thank you also to Laurie for giving us at the start of the December meeting, a live walk-through of the web pages and describing the content and purpose of each page.

The address of the web site is <http://www.rpcsg.org.uk> and you should have received an email from the Chairman announcing the site. Several of you have already had a look at the site, and made some suggestions and comments. Please have a look at the site and tell us what you think, we do appreciate any feedback and this helps us to improve the site, that we are aiming to be one of the best sites in its class.

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The December meeting on the 6th December was the Christmas Supper and Social and was an outstanding success, and with 64 members present it was a record attendance for the event and was greatly enjoyed by all. The hall was well decorated in the Christmas spirit, and we enjoyed a good buffet. Between courses there was a raffle, and after the buffet there was a quiz in three parts - general, pictures and music. The questions were deviously set by the Chairman, and all the members of the winning table were each presented with a box of chocolates.

We saw a welcome guest Geoff Morris at the social evening. Geoff is a speaker for Prostate Cancer UK, an organisation that carries out good work and runs a very comprehensive web site. Geoff gave us a very interesting talk at our meeting in July 2013, and has now become a member of our group, and his experience will be very valuable for the group.

Very many thanks are due to our Chairman Steve Allen who acted as MC for the evening, and to the committee members' wives, who organised and prepared the supper and ensured that the arrangements worked out perfectly.

## **FUTURE MEETINGS**

There will be a meeting on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2014. No formal event has been planned but everyone is invited along for an informal social gathering. At the January meeting of 2013 there were about 25 members attending, as well as two new members, so it is well worth coming along on that day.

The plan for other future meetings is shown in the web site. You will receive an email shortly before each meeting, confirming the event for the meeting.

## **FUTURE EVENTS**

A fund raising collection is being planned for March 2014. This will take place outside the Madejski Stadium football ground, and volunteers will be greatly appreciated.

## **NEW MEMBERS.**

We welcomed two new members and their partners, at the December meeting.

## **SUPPORT CONTACTS**

For any member who would like some help or support from the Group, or simply would like to chat with someone – perhaps another member who is or has been in a similar situation – any of the members below can be contacted:

Steve Allen	01189 266 747
Ian Forrester	01189 789 857
Keith Jackson	01189 842 999
Paul Sefcick	01635 34778
Graham Cook	01189 691 668
Steve Parkinson	01189 785 268

## **INTERESTING ARTICLE**

I would like to give my thanks to the member who gave me a cutting from a newspaper concerning prostate cancer treatment by a machine known as Cyberknife. I am always pleased to receive such cuttings or leads to articles, so please let me know if you see anything that could form the basis of a newsletter item.

The cutting had the headline of **'Robot zapped my prostate cancer in five weeks'**.

The story is about a man who had external radiation prostate treatment using equipment called Cyberknife, which is a machine that delivers stereotactic radiotherapy. It is part of a new class of radiotherapy techniques known as IGRT (image-guided radiotherapy) which use image-guidance enabling much more accurate delivery of the beams. The image-guidance enables precise delivery by compensating for movement of the internal organs, even due to the patient breathing during treatment.

The machine uses many beams at differing angles aimed at the prostate, so only the prostate receives the full dosage and the surrounding healthy tissue is much less affected than with other external radiation machines, and so has fewer side effects. This allows a higher beam strength to be used and hence a shorter treatment duration.

The full story can be read at this web page: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2409502/A-robot-zapped-away-prostate-cancer-just-days.html>

The Royal Marsden hospital has been a pioneer in this machine, and a good description of its features and advantages can be seen at: <http://www.royalmarsden.org/document.doc?id=54>

Whilst researching this topic, I found a very useful web site that gave an easy to read summary of the main features of prostate cancer treatments by radiation, and of different imaging systems. This is at: <http://wellspringoncology.org/cancer-treatment.html>

There is some scepticism surrounding the Cyberknife used to treat prostate cancer. The equipment is cheaper to purchase and operate than other radiation machines, and some professionals have suggested that this is a large factor in its popularity, particularly in the USA, where medical treatment is usually funded by insurance companies. A critique of Cyberknife can be read at:

<http://www.healthnewsreview.org/2011/07/cyberknife-for-prostate-cancer-still-developing-and-cant-stand-on-its-feet/>

Currently Cyberknife machines are only available at eight hospitals in the UK including Mount Vernon Hospital Middlesex, St. Bartholomew's Hospital London, the Royal Marsden in London, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, the Cyberknife Centre London (Harley Street), and the London Clinic.



A Cyberknife machine

Best wishes for Christmas and New Year

Steve Parkinson  
Newsletter editor.  
[NewsEditorRPCSG@yahoo.com](mailto:NewsEditorRPCSG@yahoo.com)

*If any member without internet access would like a printed copy of any article referenced in this newsletter, please contact me – by telephone (see in Support Contacts) or by asking a friend or relative to email me.*

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