

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE MARCH 2017 MEETING

There was a very good attendance at the March meeting. There was an excellent and informative talk by Mr Philip Charlesworth, who is a senior surgeon at the RBH, and a specialist in the use of the robotic machine. This was followed by the AGM, whose minutes can be seen in our web site, in the 'Newsletter & AGM' tab.

Mr Charlesworth is a consultant at the RBH, specialises in both bladder and prostate cancers, and has great expertise in using robotic machines.

Mr Charlesworth said that have been great improvements in the capability of MRI scanning, and he expects there to be more usage of it in the future. MRI enables consultants to visualise a tumour within the prostate, and the use of this pre-biopsy has enabled about 25% of men to be able to avoid a biopsy altogether. If a tumour is detected the scan enables a biopsy to be targeted, increasing the chance of detection, and improving outcomes. Drawbacks are the cost, and capacity of carrying out an increased quantity of scans.

The differences between open and robotic surgery were discussed, and there is no doubt that robotic has distinct advantages. These include better outcomes of cancer elimination, incontinence and ED (Erectile Dysfunction), quicker recovery, less blood loss. It is expected that the cost of robotic surgery will reduce over time.

The majority of all surgical procedures are now robotic, and prostatectomies are one of the easiest operations to carry out, requiring very little reconstructive work. The original Robbie is now at the end of its life, and the RBH now has Robbie2, a newer machine with many more capabilities, leading to better outcomes. Each of the three surgeons will carry out about 250 or more operations using the robotic machine, during the year.

An exciting development is a vaccine against urinary tract infections, that is being trialled at the RBH. It is a spray applied underneath the tongue, and will lead to a much reduced use of antibiotics. However it is not yet licensed.

A new system of One-Stop has been introduced at the RBH, which has resulting in greater efficiency and convenience. This centralises various support staff in one location, so that a patient can have several procedures in one place with a much reduced need for repeated visits. For example a patient can have a visit by a doctor, and any necessary scans and treatments, all in one day. This has enabled about 80-90% of patients entering the department to be diagnosed, treated and discharged on the same day.

In reply to some questions from the audience, Mr Charlesworth's responses were as follows:

Mr Charlesworth will try to arrange a group visit by members of RPCSG, to see the Robbie2 machine.

Haptic feedback (sense of 'feel') may be lacking by robot, but it is possible to judge within a fraction of a millimetre as to where the cancer cells are, because when pushed by a probe, they can be seen to respond differently to normal cells, especially with the 20 times zoom possible with a robotic machine.

A likely future development is the ability to overlay an MRI scan onto the screen of the robot, to help to locate the cancer cells. Also intravenous drugs can be introduced that glow under ultra-violet light, to help to locate the cancer cells.

TREASURER VACANCY

I am pleased to say that Roger Bennett has agreed to act as Treasurer. Roger has been a member of the group since its inception, and has previously acted as Secretary. Many thanks to Roger for offering to take up this post.

AWARENESS STAND

We held our awareness stand in the Broad Street Mall on March. It was a very successful day, with contact made with 227 members of the public. Contact is counted as either a discussion, or the handing out of literature. Many thanks to those who volunteered to man the stand, and to help with the assembly and dismantling stages.



A photograph of some of the volunteers, during a change of shift. Left to right: Graham Cook, Ted Goodhew, Chris Webb, Frank Jiggins, Steve Parkinson

HAPPY BIRTHDAY RPCSG

The RPCSG is now 10 years old. Beverley Skelton first took the initiative to found the group, so we owe much gratitude to her for doing so, and she is still managing the schedule of guest speakers today.

The group started in March of 2007 with only a handful of members, all dedicated people hoping to organise and expand the group. It has since been an outstanding success. Membership of the group increased and guest speakers were invited to talk at the monthly group meetings. In June 2009 there were about 50 members, and the first Newsletter

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was issued, initially on a quarterly basis. Since then we have had 84 group meetings with guest speakers, in addition to annual Christmas and Summer Social events. We have held many Awareness Sessions with the intention of making as many members of the public as possible, aware of the disease and its symptoms.

Our membership now stands at around 200 men who have attended our meetings at some time, and in excess of 90 wives or partners. Our financial position is very healthy, and I am sure that the group will continue to thrive and meet its objectives of spreading awareness of the disease, and supporting our members through their treatments.

'INSIDE HEALTH' TOPIC OF PROSTATE CANCER

BBC Radio 4 has a radio programme series named 'Inside Health' and it recently featured two episodes on the subject of prostate cancer. The first episode was entirely devoted to prostate cancer, and the topic concluded in part of the second programme, featuring the focal treatments of VPT (Vascular Targeted Photodynamic Therapy) and HIFU (High Intensity Focused Ultrasound). Whilst these programmes were available on the BBC website, I downloaded them for preservation. I saved them in two formats - as MP3 files, enabling anyone to listen to them again, and also transcripts of them as Word documents. These programmes will eventually be removed from the BBC website, but if anyone would like to have a copy of any of these files for their own use, please email me and I will send any files that you request.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

7th APRIL 2017

The guest speaker will be Diane Wootton. She is a physiotherapist in a private practice, and will include the role of physiotherapy in the recovery from prostate cancer treatment. She is one of a small number of physiotherapists that include the treatment of male incontinence.

5th MAY 2017

This will be an Open Session, and will start with an introduction by some guest specialists from the RBH Urology unit. Then the audience will be invited to put any questions to the panel of guests.

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