

# PHAROS

*A beacon of hope in the darkness*

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

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

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## THE APRIL 2017 MEETING

At the start of the April meeting, Committee member Steve Smyth gave an account of his recent running of the Reading half-marathon. He pointed out that 'running' was not entirely accurate, as some of it was walked! However he did complete the course and raised £380 on behalf of the charity Prostate Cancer UK. Steve thanked all of those sponsors who contributed to the fund raised. Congratulations to Steve for this achievement.

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## SOCIAL SECRETARY

Chairman Ted Goodhew announced that Graham Cook has volunteered for the post of social secretary. The main task of this post is making arrangements for the group's Summer and Christmas social events. Graham was previously the Chairman and has reached the end of a four year term serving on the committee. He was co-opted onto the committee by a vote put to the audience, and we are very pleased that Graham has decided to continue as a committee member.

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## DIANE WOOTTON

There was an excellent and informative talk by Diane Wootton. Diane is a chartered physiotherapist in a private practice, and is a specialist in male incontinence. She has had 14 years of physiotherapy experience, particularly for pelvic floor, bladder, bowels, prolapse and post-natal care. She treats both men and women.

Diane described the pelvic floor as a wide horizontal muscle, attaching to the pubic bone at the front, the coccyx at the rear, and to the sitting bones at the sides. It is about 5 cm thick, and provides support for all of the

abdominal organs. The prostate sits on the muscle, and after a prostatectomy there is no longer a buffer between the pelvic floor muscle and the bladder. A weak pelvic floor can then give problems with both bladder and bowels. One should avoid straining to pass a bowel movement, and avoid constipation.

Pelvic Floor Exercises can help to strengthen the pelvic floor. They involve contracting the muscle that controls the flow of urine, as if one was trying to stop the flow during the passing of urine. You should only try to stop a flow in order to learn how to tighten the correct muscle, and thereafter the exercises must not be done whilst passing urine. Additionally you can also tighten the anal sphincter muscle, as if trying to prevent passing gas. A man can confirm that he is using the correct muscles, as the scrotum should lift a little, and the penis may retract slightly. Diane described the exercises as a contraction of the muscles, holding the contraction for ten seconds, then relaxing for ten seconds. You should start to count the ten seconds after you have fully tightened the muscles, as fully tightening may take 3 or 4 seconds to achieve. This cycle of tightening and then relaxing should be carried out ten times, and was referred to a set of exercises. This set should be carried out three times per day spread out during the day, with at least 90 minutes between the sets (i.e. a total of 30 muscle contractions per day). You should continue breathing during the exercises!

It is never too late to carry out these exercises, even four years after surgery is still appropriate.

The exercises can be carried out whilst standing, but it may be easier, at least initially, to sit upright, or lie down, or lean against a wall. If one leaks a little urine during the exercises, it may be that you are inadvertently pushing down on the internal organs.

Weak pelvic muscles can affect the number of visits to a toilet that one makes during the night. Most men go about once during the night. If you are going two or three times, try

to limit your liquid intake during two hours preceding bed time, and avoid fizzy drinks, caffeine and alcohol.

The exercises are also useful before surgery, and can improve the outcome after surgery. The Royal Berkshire Hospital offers a 'Prostate School' before surgery, and it is recommended that you take advantage of this facility before any prostate treatment.

There are some advanced pelvic floor exercises that can be carried out. These include carrying out the contractions whilst walking, or whilst doing side steps ('zig zag' such as you often see footballers use in training). It is advisable to carry out a contraction after each passing of urine

Diane was thanked for her very useful talk, and presented with a gift of appreciation.

Editor's note: Diane has a web site that you are welcome to visit. It is [www.dianewootton.co.uk](http://www.dianewootton.co.uk) This web site has much useful information and enables you to contact Diane. A copy of Diane's instructions for the exercises can be found in the RPCSG web site under the tab named 'Treatment Options'



*A photograph of Diane during her talk*

## **THE BENEFITS OF MRI SCANS**

During Mr Charlesworth's talk at the March meeting, he mentioned the benefit of carrying out prostatectomies assisted by previous MRI scans. MRI scans are also useful in many other applications, and enable biopsies to be targeted at any areas of suspicion. Without a scan, biopsies are carried out to a standard pattern of locations, and may partially or completely miss any cancerous areas.

MRI scans can also spare some men from having unnecessary biopsies, in cases where scans find no evidence of tumours.

Research has shown that regular MRI scans are twice as effective than biopsies alone at detecting prostate cancer. A test carried out using 500 men, suggested that scanning would reduce the number of men having biopsies by about one quarter. Further, in cases of men with an aggressive prostate cancer, the combination of MRI scan followed by a biopsy is almost twice as likely to pick up clinically significant cancer.

It has been estimated that a screening programme using MRI scans could cut deaths by 20% and save thousands of men from having unnecessary treatment.

The NHS is considering whether the use of MRI scanning could be introduced widely. There are the issues of resources and cost to overcome.

You can read more about this usage of MRI scans at this web site:

<http://www.nhs.uk/news/2017/01January/Pages/MRI-scans-could-spare-25-per-cent-of-men-from-prostate-biopsies.aspx>

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### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**5th MAY 2017**

This will be an Open Session, and will start with an introduction by some nurses from the RBH Urology unit. Then the audience will be invited to put any requests for information, or any questions concerning prostate cancer, to the nurses. Any member who would like to relate any aspect of his treatment, will be most welcome to do so.

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

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