

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 guest speaker at the July meeting was Christine Cowap, who is the Macmillan Engagement Lead for Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Macmillan is part of the NHS Thames Valley Cancer Alliance.

Christine is the Engagement Lead, and is involved in fundraising, learning and development. She said that there are currently 2.5 million people nationally with cancer, and this is forecast to increase to about 4 million in 10 years time.

Macmillan funds learning and development, and as well as its own nurses, has GPs, pharmacists and dieticians. Macmillan's income in 2015 was £229 million of which 97% is obtained by fund raising.

Macmillan has a new campaign, supporting 'Life With Cancer', that appeared on television. The main objective is engagement with individuals, groups and communities in order to make a difference in services and communities in the future.

In the Berkshire area there are more than 100 Macmillan Nurses, project workers and other health professionals, and two Macmillan funded GPs. There are several projects, including cancer education for GPs, and working with the RBH, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust and Frimley Health Foundation to ensure their cancer teams are supported and trained as well as possible. There is a survivorship project, and a Berkshire Rehabilitation Service offering help, support, advice and signposting.

There are many volunteering opportunities. One initiative is 'befriending' - the matching up of trained volunteers, to provide physical or emotional help.

Macmillan carries out its own fundraising, with activities such as Half Marathons and cycle rides. They receive some corporate support,

and there will be collections at Marks & Spencer in September.

Macmillan is currently campaigning on hospital parking charges, and travel insurance.

Some members then raised the issue of car parking, and the difficulty and expense of finding parking spaces. Some issues with Park And Ride schemes were expressed. Christine said that she would report these to her committee.

Christine was thanked for her informative talk, and presented with a gift in appreciation.

{Editor's note: During the talk, the Macmillan Cancer Information Centre was mentioned. This is a service provided by Macmillan and is located in the Cancer Centre of the RBH. It is a drop-in service and is open between 10:00 and 14:00 from Monday to Friday. You can read detail of it at this web page:

<http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/wards-and-services/macmillan-cancer-information-centre.htm> }



A photograph of Christine during her talk

THE SUMMER SOCIAL

Our annual Summer Social will be held on the 9th August 2017, in the evening at the Calcot Hotel. Arrival is from 6:30 p.m. with the meal being served from 7:15 p.m. There were some adverse comments following the Summer Social in 2016, particularly about the food, and these have been expressed to the management of the hotel. They have said that they will correct the cause of complaints, and make extra effort this year to provide a satisfying occasion.

As this year is our 10th anniversary of the founding of the group, the committee has decided to mark this occasion by subsidising part of the cost, and reduce the cost to members to only £10 per person. The number of places is limited, so if you would like to attend the Summer Social, please let us know of your requirement for places soon. You can make payment at one of the group meetings, or you can post a cheque payable to 'Reading PCSG'. The contact person for reservation and payment is Graham Cook. You can contact Graham by email to confirm your requirement for places. If you prefer to make your payment by post or by bank transfer, please email Graham for details:

graham.cook125@btinternet.com

The evening will consist of a hot and cold buffet meal, a raffle and a quiz.

CANCER HEALTH SCARES

From time-to-time we see reports in the media concerning certain products, or ingredient chemicals that may be carcinogenic, often associated with such household items as shampoos and cleaning fluids. A recent suspect has been burnt toast, where there is a suspicion that a chemical created by the burning process, may be carcinogenic.

The Which? consumer magazine had a very interesting article in their publication of May 2017, and is reported in the following web page:

July 2017

<http://www.which.co.uk/news/2017/04/which-debunks-cancer-health-scares/>

The web page gives results of their assessments of the research and evidence behind 11 cancer risk stories. For the interest of RPCSG members, I have summarised the Which? report below. Prostate cancer is not specifically mentioned, but it is wise to heed the conclusions as they may enable us to reduce the risks of many cancers, including prostate cancer. Anyone wanting to read further about the research, can visit the web page above.

1. Shampoos.

The chemical sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS) is present in many foaming products such as soap, shampoo and toothpaste. It is also a degreasing agent used in cleaning products. While SLS can be an irritant, there is no evidence that it causes cancer.

2. Deodorants and breast cancer.

Some deodorants contain chemicals known as parabens, and it is thought that parabens could raise the risk of breast cancer. Also the aluminium in antiperspirants has been suspected of causing cancers. However tests using hundreds of women have found no difference in cancer rates between groups that do and do not use antiperspirants.

3. Talcum powder.

Talc has been suspected of causing ovarian cancer. The evidence is not completely clear, but some advice has been given to avoid using talcum around the genitals.

4. Mouthwash.

Some studies have shown that people with mouth cancer may have used mouthwash more than twice per day. However any link is unreliable as another cause of mouth cancer is poor oral hygiene, and people with such may be more inclined to be regular users of mouthwash. Other causes of mouth cancer are smoking and drinking. There is no good evidence that mouthwash increases the risk of any type of cancer.

5. Burnt toast.

Acrylamide is a natural substance formed when starchy products are heated to high temperatures. Tests have shown that high

levels of acrylamide can cause cancer in rats, but studies on people are less certain. The Food Standards Agency recommends toasting bread to a golden colour only.

6. Sausages and red meat.

Eating too much red meat has been linked to a higher rate of cancer of the lower digestive tract, especially processed meats such as ham, bacon, tinned meat and sausages. However the increase in the risk is quite small, and a modest intake of red meat (about once per week) is safe.

7. Nutella.

The second biggest ingredient in Nutella is palm oil, that can produce potentially cancer-causing contaminants when it is refined at high temperatures. It is also preferable to minimise intake of palm oil as it is high in saturated fat. The makers of Nutella have said that they use only mild heat treatments in its production.

8. Alcohol.

Every year, alcohol causes 4% of cancers in the UK, according to Cancer Research UK – that is around 12,800 cases. Drinking alcohol raises your risk of seven types of cancer: mouth, upper throat, larynx, oesophagus, liver, bowel and breast. Research shows that your cancer risk does not change whether you mete out your alcohol through the week, or only drink at weekends, if the amount of alcohol stays the same. There is no safe lower limit, so stick to the government guideline of not exceeding 14 units per week.

9. Artificial sweeteners

Many sugar-free drinks contain artificial sweeteners such as aspartame and saccharin. Some studies in the 1990s did suggest a link between sweeteners and bladder cancer in rats. But since then, reviews of all available evidence have been carried out, which indicate that there is no risk of sweeteners causing cancer.

10. Green tea.

Green tea has a reputation for containing beneficial anti-oxidants, however drinking green tea has not been shown to prevent cancers. Very large studies have not found any evidence that taking antioxidant

supplements prevents the disease. Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables is a better way of making sure that you get the antioxidants that you need.

11. Plastic bottles.

Drinking from plastic bottles that contain the compound bisphenol A (BPA) is thought unlikely to increase your risk of cancer. BPA can move in tiny amounts from a plastic container or bottle into the food or drink. But it is at such low levels that it has never been shown to affect health, and there is no convincing evidence that BPA causes cancer in people.

I am very grateful to the Which? magazine for giving me permission to present the summary above, of their findings. The Which? magazine is produced by the Consumers' Association and is a very interesting and informative magazine, reporting not only on consumer product assessments and 'Best Buy' league tables, but also on many lifestyle services, such as insurance, health, leisure and financial matters. You can see a good insight into the magazine at this web page:

<http://try.which.co.uk/good-decision>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

4th AUGUST 2017

The guest speaker at the July meeting will be Dr Paul Rogers, a senior Oncology consultant at the RBH. His topics will be chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and developments.

9th AUGUST 2017

This is the Summer Social at the Calcot Hotel, Reading. Please see above for details of this event.

1st SEPTEMBER 2017

This is the memorial service for our former Treasurer Keith Hunt. Details have been sent by email. This is an RSVP occasion so please ensure that you email a reply if you would like to attend.

Steve Parkinson
Newsletter Editor.
NewsEditorRPCSG@yahoo.com

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