

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

THE NOVEMBER MEETING

The Chairman Ted Goodhew introduced the evening, and welcomed two new members. He advised that the December meeting will be the Christmas Social at a cost of only £10 per person, and that the closing date for members to put their names down for this event, is the 17th November. The Treasurer Roger Bennett was on hand to collect names and payments for the Social.

The guest speaker was Geoff Richardson from the Medical Detection Dogs charity. He was accompanied by his delightful dog called Pip. Geoff gave an interesting talk whilst Pip wandered around looking for people to stroke her.

The Medical Detection Dogs is a charity and relies solely on donations. It receives no public money from the Government. It has been a charity since 2008 and has one centre in Great Horwood, with a staff of around 30 people, including part-timers and contractors.

The detection dogs are trained to detect a particular smell, which they are able to detect in very low proportions. A disease changes cells such that by-products (volatiles) enter the bloodstream and are removed by the body through breath or urine. The dogs are trained to alert their owner when the smells go outside the normal limits, by barking, or pawing. In the case of children, the dogs are usually trained to nuzzle the back of the child's hand, as this is alerting method is better received by a child.

There are two types of detection dogs: Cancer Detecting, and Medical Alert Assistance.

Medical Alert dogs help people to manage their conditions, by alerting the patient in a specific way, when they detect that a patient's condition becomes abnormal, thus indicating to the patient that some

medication is needed. The dogs can even be trained to bring medication to the patient.

The diseases that the dogs can detect and alert to, include type 1 diabetes, Addison's disease, Narcolepsy, severe nut allergy, and pain seizures (except for epilepsy).

The use of a detecting dog gives the patient more confidence and independence, and improves their quality of life. The dogs saves lives and reduce cost to the NHS.

Diabetes and its complications account for about 10% of the NHS budget. Dogs alert their owner when the glucose level in the blood becomes either too high or too low.

It takes about two years to train a puppy, at a cost of about £11,000. A placement of about 16 dogs per year is the target. Sixty dogs have been placed to date, and there is a long waiting list.

Geoff said that there have been some attempts to create an electronic nose that performs the same job as the dogs, however they have not been successful so far as it has not been possible to replicate the sensitivity of the dogs' noses, and we do not understand exactly what the dogs are detecting. Medical Detection Digs is supporting the development of electronic noses.

Cancer Detection Dogs can detect some cancers including bladder and breast, and some urological cancers. In the case of prostate cancer, the dogs can provide a second line screening, with the advantages that it is non-invasive, and have an accuracy of greater than 90%. It takes four to six months to train a detection dog, and there are currently 18 working cancer and bio-detection dogs.

Geoff said that the charity would welcome any support, by way of donations, sponsorships and volunteers.

Medical Detection Dogs has a web site at www.medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk and can be contacted on 01296 655888.

Geoff was thanked for his presentation, and presented with a gift of appreciation.



A photograph of Geoff and Pip during the talk

THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

For those members who have signed up to this event, the Christmas Social will be on the 1st December 2017 in St Andrews church hall at 7:00 p.m. The hot and cold buffet meal will be served from about 7:30 p.m. Don't forget that this is a 'Bring Your Own' occasion for which you should bring drinks for your own consumption. A complementary drink will be provided on arrival.

FREE PSA TESTING

The Lions organisations hold occasional PSA testing events, to spread awareness of prostate cancer and give easy access to a test. The PSA tests are free and available on demand - it is a walk-in service. Every man having a free test will be informed by post of the results, and in the case of abnormal readings, will be advised to seek consultation.

Will you please spread information about the free tests to anyone who may benefit - friends, colleagues, relatives, etc. Especially in cases where there has been some occurrence of the disease in the family line. There are three local events, in Reading on 3rd March 2018, in Maidenhead on 1st March 2018, and in Windsor on 26th April 2018. The age guideline is for men over the age of 45, but this is unlikely to be enforced - if in doubt you could check with the organisers beforehand. The following links provide further information, and full information will be available later for the Reading event:

Reading:

<http://www.readinglions.org.uk/>

Maidenhead:

<https://www.maidenheadlions.org.uk/prostate-awareness>

Windsor:

<http://www.windsorlions.co.uk/prostate-awareness-and-check/>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1st DECEMBER 2017

For those members who have enlisted for this event, our annual Christmas Social will be held in St Andrews Church Hall from 7:00 p.m. Don't forget to bring your own drinks to the occasion!

5th JANUARY 2018

There will be a meeting on 5th January 2018. There is no guest speaker at January meetings, and it will be an informal opportunity to have a good chat to other members. All members are most welcome to come along. Refreshments will be available as usual.

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professional advice for medical diagnosis or treatment or to advocate or recommend the purchase of any product or use of any service or guarantee the credentials or appropriateness of any health care provider. Members are strongly advised to consult with an appropriate professional for specific advice tailored to their situation.

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