

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE NOVEMBER MEETING

Chairman Ted Goodhew introduced the meeting and welcomed three new members.

The guest speaker was Charlotte Robinson who is a Radiologist at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Charlotte talked about the rising awareness of prostate cancer, helped by the recent reports of celebrities such as Stephen Fry and Bill Turnbull. Both referrals and diagnoses are increasing, with a large increase in the past year. Charlotte presented some graphs showing that whilst diagnoses have increased, the mortality rate is largely steady, thanks to the increased use of PSA tests and new technology in treatments.

Charlotte described the Old Pathway to treatment. She said that there is no screening programme for prostate cancer and that there is no evidence that it would save lives. Biopsies help to confirm the presence of cancer, and if confirmed the treatments are Active Surveillance, Surgery or Radiotherapy.

The PSA test is non-specific and recently another measure is in use, that takes account of the volume of the prostate by measuring the PSA divided by the prostate volume, with a figure of 0 to 0.15 being the normal range for a healthy prostate. Charlotte described the main scanning techniques of ultrasound and CT scans. Ultrasound is a safe technique but needs some expertise in interpretation. CT scan is the main-stay scan method, and Charlotte showed some slides of scans of the chest, liver, kidney and prostate. It is not known how much radiation is dangerous and some data has been extrapolated from the Hiroshima episode. She said that a person living in Cornwall receives an annual background radiation dose of about 2 mSv. A chest X ray is the equivalent of 10 days of background radiation and a CT scan of the chest, abdomen and pelvis is equivalent to about 3 years of background radiation.

CT Colonography is a fairly new technique for investigating the colon and finding polyps. Cardiac CT scanning is also possible.

MRI scans are superb in soft tissue resolution but are complex to interpret. PET scans are used for whole body scans and use a radioactive tracer. Tumours can be detected as 'hot' areas (where cancer cells are more active) which are difficult to see on standard CT scans. This scan is useful in tumour staging. PET scans are available at Oxford, Guildford and the Marsden hospital.

Charlotte described the 'Old Pathway' which had disadvantages that not all lesions detected were clinically significant, it presented difficulties in deciding when to treat some cancers and biopsies only examined the posterior part of the prostate.



Photograph of Charlotte during a talk to the RPCSG.

The current Pathway using MRI has produced a huge improvement in diagnosis. MRI is twice as likely to find prostate cancer than a biopsy and can be used pre-biopsy to help to target the biopsy samples. An enhancement is the mpMRI (multi parametric MRI) that used diffusion technology to detect the movement of water which is much reduced in cancer cells. It provides

much greater resolution than the MRI scan and enables improved detection. It can also vary the contrast but this is not needed on the 3T machine at the RBH.

The new Pathway is to see a GP and then be referred to the two week Pathway. This first uses MRI scans and if found to have a negative result could eliminate unnecessary biopsies. In the cases of positive scans biopsies can be targeted at locations at which cancer is suspected.

Charlotte then described the technique of Prostate Artery Embolisation which blocks prostate arteries and shrinks the central portion of the gland by denial of the blood supply. It is currently used only to treat BPH (Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy) but in the future could be approved for the treatment of prostate cancer.

Charlotte was thanked for her interesting talk and presented with a gift of appreciation.

Articles about the usefulness of MRI scans before biopsies can be found on the internet. During her talk Charlotte referred to an article in the Daily Telegraph that can be seen at:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2017/01/19/prostate-cancer-could-ruled-simple-mri-scan-prevents-25000-biopsies/>

PAST EVENT - RPCSG NOVEMBER WALK

The walk that started at the Wokingham Waterside Park on the 6th November was a very enjoyable occasion, with 13 members and one dog taking part. The route was along the Thames to Caversham and then a visit to the ruins of Reading Abbey. After a refreshment stop near to the Forbury in Reading we returned along the river Kennet and then along the Thames.

Photographs during the walk:





In Caversham



Along the Thames

NEXT RPCSG WALK - 4th December 2018

The December walk will take place on Tuesday **4th December** and will start at 10:30 in the village of Hambleden, which is north-east of Henley. This will be a picturesque walk through the Chiltern valley to Skirmett, where there will be a refreshment stop at The Frog. We will then return by the same route, the total walk being about 5 miles.

Anyone who does not want to do the walk is invited to join the walkers for the refreshments at The Frog in Skirmett, postcode RG9 6TG. We will probably arrive there around 12:00 noon to 12:30 p.m.

Direction to the starting point of the cafe in the middle of Hambleden village, is to take the A4 East out of Reading then take the A321 to Henley via Wargrave. Cross the bridge at Henley and follow the A4155 signposted to Marlow. After about 4 miles turn left to Hambleden and about one mile further on bear right at a fork in the road and the village centre is then about 150 yards further on. The sat-nav postcode RG9 6RP will take you close to the centre of the village. There is free parking in the village.

THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

The Christmas Social will be held as the December meeting, on the **7th December 2018** in St Andrews church hall. Arrival is between 6:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. with the hot and cold buffet meal being served from about 7:30 p.m. Don't forget that this is a 'Bring Your Own' occasion for which you should bring drinks whether alcoholic or not, for your own consumption.

The event has proved very popular in the past, with a buffet meal served by our usual caterer Mange Bien, also a quiz, raffle and a guessing game. The number of places is limited so if you have not yet enrolled and would like to attend, please reserve your places as soon as possible as the remaining few places may be taken soon. Please note that there is a closure date for booking places of the **28th November 2018**, this being the date by which numbers must be confirmed to the caterer.

The cost of the social is £18 per person. To reserve places, please contact the Treasurer Roger Bennett by email to: saroban@btinternet.com.

You can then make payment by cheque payable to 'Reading PCSG' and posted to Roger at this address:

52 Deanfield Road
Henley-on-Thames
RG9 1UU

If you would prefer to pay by direct bank transfer, please send an email to Roger for details of how to do this.

Please advise Roger if you have any dietary requirements.

GROUP MEETING JANUARY 2019

Attendance is usually somewhat lower at our January meetings due to people's commitments at festive events. We will hold a meeting on the 4th January 2019 but there will not be a guest speaker. Instead it will be an opportunity to chat with other members and there is always the possibility of new members at the meeting.

Best wishes for Christmas and New Year.

Steve Parkinson
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DISCLAIMER

This newsletter does not offer medical advice. Nothing contained in the newsletter is intended to constitute 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.

This newsletter may refer to named providers and their products or services, and such reference expresses no inference upon any aspect of any provider's business, services or products, and expresses no recommendation or preference for any such products or services.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

4th DECEMBER 2018

This is the RPCSG walk from Hambleden to Skirmett, taking in the Chiltern valley.

7th DECEMBER 2018

The Christmas Social

4th JANUARY 2019

This will be an informal meeting with no guest speaker. It will be a chance to chat socially with other members.