

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE APRIL MEETING

Chairman Chris Addison introduced the evening, welcoming all to the meeting and a particular welcome to three new members.

The guest speakers for the meeting were from the newly opened Rutherford Centre, which is located in Shinfield, South of M4 and a little to the East of junction 11. This is a private facility offering many treatments for cancer patients, and in particular they have a proton beam machine. Proton beams are suitable for cancer treatment as the beams can be pencil thin and can be controlled very accurately and so minimise damage to healthy tissue in the region of the target gland being treated. A big advantage is that proton beams can be made to stop at the tumour and hence there is no exit dose to damage healthy tissue beyond the cancerous tissue being treated.

The speakers were Laura Geer, Centre Manager, Mark Osborne, Principal Physicist and Shabnum Akhtar, Deputy Radiographer.

I am very grateful to Beverley for providing the following report on the talk.

Laura Geer started the evening talking about the centre. It is run by Proton Partners International and named after the renowned scientist Ernest Rutherford who identified the proton many years ago. There are 2 other centres open and 1 in Liverpool under construction. Patients have access to the latest proton beam therapy equipment which minimises damage to peripheral tissue and organs thus reducing side effects. They also provide external beam radiotherapy and chemotherapy. They have strong links with the University of Pennsylvania and all patients are reviewed by consultants in the USA. They are innovative and committed to excellence. The building has been kitted out with the best technology and relaxed and modern facilities. They provide transport and accommodation if needed and have a supportive social, spiritual and psychological support system available. They also work with complementary therapies.

Shabnum Akhtar then spoke about the supportive care provided. All patients have a Holistic assessment looking at things like financial, psychological and social concerns on their first visit. Areas of concern are highlighted and referrals can be made to the relevant support systems. These are paid for by the Rutherford centre and are then reassessed after a few appointments and then again at the end of treatment. The support can be continued for a period after the treatment has completed.

Mark Osborne then went through the physics behind the proton system. There are 3 Physicists and 2 dosimeters at the Rutherford Centre. He showed pictures of the bunker that is 30 x 30 metres with a large proportion underground and a tall tower above that can be seen from the M4. He outlined the advantages of the Proton beam compared to the traditional radiotherapy. With radiotherapy the treatment dose passes all through the body affecting tissue in front and behind the tumour site. Protons, however, deposit all the dose at the tissue and the tissue behind the tumour is not affected. This is known as the Bragg Peak. This has the advantage of decreasing the side effects to the treatment. Mark showed photos of treatment plans and the difference between radiotherapy fields and proton fields and the obvious advantages of not treating major organs.

The session was then opened to questions.

The number of treatments needed is similar to radiotherapy and depends on the organ being treated. It was asked if it could be given more than once and as it does not damage the tissues it is thought that it may be possible. It may also be able to have proton after previous radiotherapy. As it spares tissue it can be given to pregnant women. The side effects are more acute but improve faster and are less intrusive than radiotherapy side effects.

A question was asked regarding the risk of future cancers. It is suggested that as the tissues are spared it is a lower risk, but it is still put as a risk on the consent forms.

There is interaction with the NHS although the Rutherford centre does not treat NHS patients. There is a proton centre at Christies however that does treat NHS patients. The centre does however work with the NHS training radiographers and are looking to work more closely with the NHS in the future. The cost is between £27,000 and £80,000 depending on the area to be treated with prostate treatment between £27,000 and £40,000. It is suggested that the cost effectiveness of the treatment over a lifetime will bring the cost down.



The Rutherford speakers during their talk

The Rutherford centre has offered a tour of their facility to members of the RPCSG. This tour is on Friday 24th May 2019 from 2 p.m. until 4 p.m. If you would like to attend this tour please send an email to Steve Allen so that he can manage the number of visitors. His email is drstephenallen@btinternet.com

NEXT GROUP MEETING 3rd MAY 2019

The meeting on the 3rd May will have a guest speaker Susan Drew of Prostate Cancer UK, who will talk about the work and services of PCUK.

AWARENESS EVENTS

The awareness stand that we held on the 23rd March in the Broad Street shopping mall was our most successful to date. We spoke to 303 men and 51 ladies to give them detail of the disease and stress the importance of early detection and treatment. Many thanks to all who helped to manage the stand.

NEXT AWARENESS EVENT.

We will hold a further awareness event on the 29th June, this time our pitch will be close to Marks & Spencer on Broad Street in Reading. This day coincides with the Armed Forces Day in Reading and so we expect more people than usual to be around. We will greatly appreciate anyone who can lend a hand by volunteering to attend at one of our time slots. These are 10:00 to 12:00 p.m., 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you can help out please contact Steve Allen by email at this email address: drstephenallen@btinternet.com

WALKING EVENTS

Four brave members took part in the walk on the 2nd April, starting at Simon's Wood and encompassing the Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve park. The weather was inclement at times, but the walk overall was very enjoyable and a good lunch was had at the Greyhound pub.



Photographs during the April walk

NEXT RPCSG WALK - 7th MAY 2019

The May walk will be on the 7th May and will start in Pangbourne, walking to Goring for lunch or refreshments, and returning to Pangbourne by a short railway journey. The walk will be a total of about 5 miles.

There are two car parks in Whitchurch Road and we will depart from the first car park at 10:30 a.m. Driving through Pangbourne on the A329, turn into Whitchurch Road and the first car park is about 200 yards on the left. There is a second car park a little further along, on the right. Both car parks are before the Whitchurch toll bridge and cost £2.50 for 8 hours.

THE SUMMER SOCIAL EVENT

The meeting on the 5th July will be our Summer Social. This will be held in St Andrews church hall with arrival from 7:00 p.m. for a meal to be served from 7:30 p.m. The caterer will be our usual Mange Bien who have served us previously on many occasions, serving a hot and cold buffet meal. The evening will also have a quiz, raffle and a guessing game. There will be a complimentary drink on arrival and the cost this year is £17.50 per person. This is always a very popular occasion and places are limited in number so please book your places as soon as possible. Payment can be made to the Treasurer Roger Bennett at either the May or June meetings. Payment can also be made by posting a cheque to Roger made payable to "Reading PCSG" at the address below, or if you prefer to pay by a direct bank transfer please send an email to Roger for details of how to do this, to him at this email address: saroban@btinternet.com

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

3rd MAY 2019

The guest speaker at this group meeting will be Susan Drew of Prostate Cancer UK.

7th MAY 2019

This will be the RPCSG walk from Pangbourne to Goring.

7th JUNE 2019

The guest speaker at this group meeting is being arranged.

29th JUNE 2019

An awareness stand in Broad Street, Reading

5th JULY 2019

This is the Summer Social occasion.