

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 JULY MEETING.

Our July RPCSG meeting was held using Zoom on the 3rd July. The invitation was extended to a couple of small prostate support groups and was attended by 30 of our members and 8 from other groups.

The guest speaker was Diane Wootton who is a physiotherapist with a private practice. She has a lot of expertise in the pelvic floor and treatments for incontinence. She has worked in physiotherapy for about 43 years of which the last 20 have included a specialisation in the pelvic floor. Her areas of work are Reading, Windsor and Ascot.

Diane described the pelvic floor muscles. These are large group muscles two layers thick, that attach to the pubic bone at the front and the coccyx at the base of the spine. At the sides they are attached to the sitting bones. The muscles support the pelvic organs such as the bladder and bowel. The prostate is located above the pelvic floor muscles and the urethra passes through the prostate and the muscles and then runs along the penis. The rectum also passes through the muscles.

Exercising the pelvic floor muscles can be carried out before any treatment and this can help to improve the outcome of treatment. Exercising the muscles after treatment can help to regain continence.

At one time the opinion was that pelvic floor exercises for men should include exercise of the anal sphincter muscle as well. However this is not now advised unless the patient experiences problems with bowel or wind control.

Pelvic floor exercise involves the contraction of the external (below the prostate) urinary sphincter muscle. This is the muscle that you would use to try to stop urination once a flow had started. You should only try to stop a flow in order to identify how to do the muscle contraction, it is not recommended that you try to stop a flow at any other time.

When you contract the muscle properly a man should feel some effects. The scrotum can rise slightly and the penis should lift and contract. Standing in front of a mirror and observing the effect can also help to confirm a proper contraction, as will placing your fingers on either side of the base of the penis to feel the movements during contractions. You should not use any other muscles whilst doing the contraction, particularly do not contract the buttocks or thigh muscles.

The programme of exercises consists of three types of muscular contractions. These can initially be carried from a seated position and eventually from a standing position.

The first is known as slow contractions. The urinary sphincter muscle should be contracted and held for 10 seconds. If you cannot hold it for 10 seconds initially, do as many as you can and work your way gradually up to 10 seconds. Then relax the muscle for about 4 seconds. Repeat this 9 more times and you will then have completed a session of 10 contractions. You should carry out three sessions per day, spaced out during the day. You should only start to count the 10 seconds hold time after you have achieved a full muscle contraction.

The second type is 'fast' contractions. These are similar to the above but the contractions last for only about one second. This will help you to develop an ability to rapidly contract the muscle

to help prevent leakage on occasions such as laughing, sneezing or getting up from a seated position. Again a session of these exercises consists of ten contractions and you should carry out three sessions during the day.

The third type is known as 'Sub Max' exercises to be carried out whilst walking, that are to hold a contraction at 50% of your maximum for 20 to 30 seconds.

Your urinary symptoms should decline after a period of about six to twelve months of exercising. You should then carry out 'maintenance' exercises for the rest of your life. The maintenance exercises should consist of just one session per day of the slow exercises, one session of the fast exercises and one session of the Sub Max exercises.

Diane recommended keeping to a normal weight and avoiding constipation.

In reply to questions from the audience Diane said that doing the exercises from a squatting position is ideal although it is quite difficult to do the exercises whilst squatting.

Diane said that you can buy an application known as 'Squeezy for men' but ensure that the one that you download is from the NHS. The app costs £2.99 and give reminders of exercises at due times and guides you through the exercises. You can programme the targets.

A couple of members still suffered much incontinence after twelve months. Diane said that in these cases you should see your GP for a referral to a urology unit. Some members had had an Artificial Urinary Sphincter fitted with great success.

Diane was thanked for her very useful presentation.

Editors notes: Diane has instruction sheets for carrying out pelvic floor exercises, one sheet for men and one for women. You can find these in our web site rpcsg.org.uk at the foot of the tab named 'Treatment Options'.

Diane has her own web site at dianewootton.co.uk. You are welcome to visit her site in which you will find much information including how to contact her.

NEXT RPCSG ZOOM MEETING - 7th August 2020

The next RPCSG Zoom meeting will be held on Friday 7th August 2020 when the guest speaker will be Natalie Holmes from the Talking Therapies organisation who will describe the methodology and benefits of Talking Therapy.

RPCSG AUGUST WALK

There will be an RPCSG walk on Monday 3rd August from Ramsbury, Wiltshire. It will start at 11:00 a.m. outside The Bell inn, postcode SN8 2PE. Free on-road parking is available near to the inn.

Because of the coronavirus restrictions you should bring your own refreshments for a lunch stop along the way. We will observe the social distancing rules at all times.

The walk is in an area of outstanding natural beauty and will be a leisurely 4 to 5 mile walk.

The previous walk was held on 7th July and attended by 10 people. The decision was taken to walk from the Waterside Park to Sonning instead of Reading as intended, due to the Forbury remaining closed. Unfortunately The Mill at Sonning was closed due to the coronavirus but a rest stop was made in the grounds of St Andrew's church and the walk was most enjoyable.

Photographs taken during the walk:



Proof of social distancing!

A rest stop outside St Andrew's church hall in Sonning

COFFEE MEETINGS

A coffee meeting was held at the Flower Pot in Aston on the 17th July. It was an enjoyable occasion held outdoors with social distancing and fortunately the weather was perfect. Another coffee morning is being arranged, details will be emailed to all members later.

AN AWARD FOR ANDREW

Our committee member Andrew Gabriel has dedicated himself to the cause of prostate cancer, acquiring a huge amount of knowledge and sharing this by way of making presentations to patient groups that have been very well received. His efforts have been recognised and he has received *The Aldworth Lodge Jubilee Award 2020* for voluntary work, for his support of prostate cancer patients and prostate cancer awareness. The majority of this award was a donation to charity with an amount left over for Andrew. He kindly donated his amount of £1,050 to the charity Prostate Cancer UK that is a very worthwhile charity doing good work in the field of prostate cancer. Many congratulations to Andrew for this award, and thanks for his donation to PCUK.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

Monday 3rd August 2020 will be an RPCSG walk from The Bell inn at Ramsbury.

Friday 7th August 2020 will be a Zoom group meeting with guest speaker Natalie Holmes from Talking Therapies.