

# PHAROS

*A beacon of hope in the darkness*

*Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)*

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## THE SEPTEMBER MEETING.

I am very grateful to Beverley for taking the notes as below at the September meeting. I missed the meeting due to being on holiday and Beverley made the superbly detailed account below. The September meeting was held using Zoom and featured a talk by nurse Jo Hand of the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Jo Hand has been the Clinical Oncology Research Nurse with a particular interest in Urology trials at the Royal Berkshire Hospital for 17 years. She pointed out that despite the RBH being a small district hospital they carry out a large number of trials but they are generally Phase 3 trials. The bigger hospitals such as Oxford or Southampton carry out more phase 2 and 3 trials. She described the Phase 3 trials which are random controlled trails such as Add Aspirin and Stampede. They have also taken part in the occasional Phase 2 trial such as Aramis. These are generally new drugs that start with just a number and if they are proven to work are given a name and carried through to Phase 3 trials.

Add Aspirin is a large randomised trial to see if low/interim risk patients benefit from taking regular aspirin to prevent cancer returning and therefore further deaths. It recruited patients with breast, stomach, oesophagus, bowel and prostate cancer. It was a controlled blinded trial taking patients within the 12 weeks after treatment completed (e.g. surgery/ radiotherapy) The patients were seen at their 4 weeks appointment and given the information. There was a good take up for this trial, probably because it was using a drug that is well known and well tolerated. There is stringent screening however to check for things like cardiac issues, stomach ulcers and allergies. It started with an 8 weeks trial of low dose Aspirin (100mg not the 75mg we can buy over the counter as a trial in the USA used 100mg for a previous colorectal trial) After the 8 weeks patients were consented again to be blinded for the rest of the trial. There were 3 arms;

1. Placebo
2. 100mg Aspirin
3. 300mg Aspirin

The trial was over 5 years with very close monitoring. This trial is coming to a close but will probably continue with an annual follow up although this has not yet been formalised.

The other big trial the RBH is involved is STAMPEDE. This trial has been running since 2005 and is a multi-arm randomised controlled trial. It is now on Arm L (having started on A). It has had various results with some arms stopped when not giving positive results. These patients are then followed up as part of the control group.

Covid has caused a pause in trials but the latest arm is Standard of Care versus Oestrogen patches. There will be new arms coming for new ways to give radiotherapy and various immunotherapy treatments. Meetings are being held for these new ideas.

STAMPEDE has changed the face of prostate cancer treatments bringing hormones in, changing the timings for radiotherapy or Chemotherapy particularly bringing these treatments in as first line treatments. One arm looked at giving radiotherapy to the prostate in men with 'low burden' metastatic disease i.e. less than 3 areas of metastatic disease. That was a radical development

presented in 2018. The other arm open at the moment is hormone patches instead of injections. Looking at whether this is beneficial with less side effects.

The RBH is also working on Commercial trials. Jo commented that these are important as they provide finance for new trials. They are more fiddly to set up however. At the moment they are working on ARAMIS, a trial set up by the drug company Bayer. It is a trial for men with non metastatic, castrate resistant prostate cancer. It was using a drug known as ODM-21 to start with. It is a blinded trial using a placebo vs ODM-21. As this was using a new drug with no known side effects there was very close and extensive monitoring using regular ECG, blood tests and scans. The interim results are good and the drug was then licensed under the name Darolutamide. NICE (the Government Drug Control group) took a while to get the drug approved but those on Darolutamide + hormones had a survival rate of 40.4 months compared to those on hormones (18 months survival). Bayer then unblinded everyone and all patients were offered the opportunity to continue the drug or if on the standard arm, transfer to take Darolutamide. The drug is now approved as standard treatment for men with prostate cancer. The cost of the drug is £4000 for 28 days but Bayer are continuing to pay for the patients on the trial so they are not having to fight to get the drug prescribed through the NHS.

Another commercial trial that Bayer are setting up is looking at Radium 223 for patients with advance prostate cancer. This is focusing on bony metastatic disease. It uses a radioactive dye given intravenously that attaches to the disease.

The trial RADIUMS is looking at Radium 223 for patients in whom second line treatments have failed. It will be given after Enzalutamide or Abiraterone. It is also suggesting that patients can have both drugs before Radium 223 (it is one or the other at the moment). It is difficult to recruit as patients will be unwell. Abiraterone also has to be given with steroids which can be difficult to take. It has been a very difficult trial to set up and she has been trying since 2020. As it is a new drug there are many tests. Most can be done at the RBH but a DEXA scan has to be done at an independent hospital causing complications. It is hopefully opening within the next few months giving a further treatment option for patients with escaping disease.

That concluded her formal presentation but she kindly took questions from the group. There was a question about whether Aspirin would take over from hormones. Jo replied saying that the trials are not complete but NICE will be looking at the effectiveness of the treatment and also patients are asked to complete Quality of Life Questionnaires and these are also taken into account when agreeing to allow future treatments.

Positively the Stampede trial for Enzalutamide has led to a change in treatment for hormone escaped disease. Jo recognised that trials of known drugs given in different settings e.g. aspirin can also lead to changes in practice as well as totally new drugs on the market. The SPACE OAR system is also another trial of a non drug treatment that has been trialled and shown to be effective.

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### **NEXT RPCSG ZOOM MEETING – 1st October 2021**

The next group meeting will be held by Zoom **on Friday 1st October** that will feature a talk by Nicky Robinson on nutrition.

## RPCSG WALKS

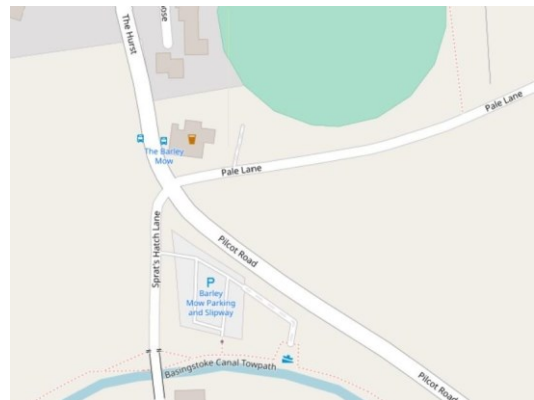
We held an enjoyable walk in September starting in Ramsbury. The walk was very good and in spite of a poor weather forecast the rain held off until the walk had finished.

The next RPCSG walk will start at the Barley Mow Parking and Slipway car park at **11:00 a.m. on Tuesday 12th October 2020**. The slipway car park is about 2 miles south of Hartley Wintney and is free of charge.

The walk will be almost 4 miles and mostly alongside the Basingstoke canal and will be very serene and pleasant. Please bring your own refreshments and we will have a refreshment stop either along the way or when we return to the car park, where there are a couple of picnic benches.

We will start at the Barley Mow Parking and Slipway car park at 11:00 a.m. Note that this is **not** the car park next to the Barley Mow pub - we will park in the Barley Mow Parking and Slipway car park that is on the opposite side of the road to the pub.

You can use a satnav with the postcode RG27 8DE but beware that it will probably take you to a spot on The Hurst that is to the north of the Barley Mow pub. If you are traveling south on The Hurst continue until you reach the Barley Mow pub. Opposite the Barley Mow there is a right turn into Sprat's Hatch Lane. After a few yards on Sprat's Hatch Lane there is the entrance on the left to the Barley Mow Parking and Slipway where you can park free of charge.



The map on the right should help you, in which the car park is marked by the letter P and the name of the car park.

If you have any queries about the walk please contact Richard Brown on 07973 662925.

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## COFFEE MORNINGS

In September there was an incredibly popular coffee morning held at the Cunning Man in Burghfield. There were 18 members present which is a record, the garden was perfect for us, and the weather was great.

The October coffee morning will be on the 19th October and I will send details when the event has been finalised.

Some photographs during the September walk and coffee morning:



*Refreshment stop at the Roman mosaic site*

*Coffee morning at The Cunning Man*

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**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.**

**Friday 1st October 2021** is an RPCSG Zoom meeting with a talk on nutrition by Nicky Robinson.

**Tuesday 12th October 2021** is an RPCSG walk starting at the Barley Mow Slipway.

**Tuesday 19th October** is a coffee morning, details to follow.