

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE APRIL 2022 MEETING

The meeting on the 1st April was a Zoom meeting that was attended by 29 RPCSG members and 6 guests from other support groups. The meeting featured a talk by Mr Philip Charlesworth who is a consultant urological surgeon at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and gave a talk on recent advances in prostate cancer diagnostics and treatments.

Mr Charlesworth said that he has worked at the RBH since 2012. He has carried out over 1000 robotic operations predominately for prostate cancer and over 300 bladder cancer operations. Mr Charlesworth carries out Retzius sparing prostatectomies.

The Retzius space is in front of the prostate and contains nerves and other tissue. Traditionally the approach to the prostate for surgery caused some damage to the Retzius space. Using a different approach that is more difficult, the Retzius space is avoided and results in a much improved outcome after surgery for both continence and erectile function. In conventional prostatectomy about 20% to 30% of patients in the UK have long term incontinence, with Retzius sparing the figure is about 1%.

MRI scans are now routine before biopsies. There have been improvements in MRI machine quality, the software and interpretations of the scans. A new technique is to calculate prostate density that helps to reduce the number of false negatives.

Mr Charlesworth then showed a slide of photographs of various models of robotic machine that have developed over time.

In 2006 the RBH was one of the first trusts to use robots using the 'S' model. In 2017 it was upgraded to the 'SI' model. These were followed by the 'X' and 'XI' models. A very new model is called the 'SP' model, standing for Single Port in which rather than having several entry points to the body for instruments and camera, the SP uses a single entry point for all the tools together that open out inside the body, the obvious benefit being that only one incision is made. In RBH there is a plan to upgrade the SI machine to an XI.

There have been improvements in radiotherapy such that the usual daily treatment day for 6 weeks is now reduced to 4 weeks, and the visit rate is less than every day.

The rectal spacer gel (SpaceOAR) is now extensively used at RBH for radiotherapy. This gel has been submitted for approval by NICE.

Mr Charlesworth talked about the effects of the pandemic. Of concern is the large drop in the numbers of men being diagnosed that in turn could lead in the future to tumours being at late stages when diagnosed. Also there have been fewer chemotherapy treatments using Docetaxel during the pandemic but there have been more treatments using Enzalutamide instead, that is a tablet rather than injection and is better tolerated.

Mr Charlesworth showed a video of a prostatectomy in which he said that the instruments used although seemingly very large on the screen, are only a few millimetres long. The body cavity is filled with a gas during the surgery that reduces the amount of blood loss.

Mr Charlesworth then invited some questions from the audience in which he mentioned that SABR is a type of radiotherapy that is not currently used at RBH.

Mr Charlesworth was thanked for his very interesting talk.

The next RPCSG meeting will be the May meeting by Zoom on the 6th May and will feature a talk by Dr Steve Allen on Pain Management. Dr Allen is member of the RPCSG committee.

Please note that the usual day for our June meeting would have fallen on a Bank Holiday and the Platinum Jubilee celebrations so we have decided to bring the meeting forward to the 27th May 2022. The guest speaker is being arranged and details will be sent to you nearer to the date.

RPCSG WALKS

The April walk in Theale was very enjoyable. The next walk is planned for the 17th May starting in Pangbourne at 10:15 a.m. The walk will be about 4½ miles.

You can park in either of two car parks in Pangbourne. Driving through Pangbourne turn off the A329 into Whitchurch Road (B 471) and the first car park is about 200 yards on the left. There is a second car park about 100 yards further along, on the right. Both car parks are before the Whitchurch toll bridge and are pay-and-display. Ensure that you buy a ticket to cover your expected stay and display the ticket in your windscreen.

We will depart from the first car park at 10:15 a.m. The post code RG8 7BS will take you close to the first car park.

Partners are also welcome to this event.

If you have any queries you can call Richard Brown on 07973 66292

COFFEE MORNINGS

We will not hold a coffee morning in April as many members have said that they will be unable to attend on the day that was proposed, due to holidays or appointments.

The May coffee morning will be held on Tuesday 24th May from 11:45 a.m. at The Cunning Man in Burghfield. Remember to register your car number at the entrance to the pub on arrival as parking restrictions apply.

Directions to The Cunning Man are to travel north on Burghfield Road that runs from Burghfield to Prospect Park. The road passes over the M4 and the pub is then on the left about 0.75 miles further on. The postcode is RG30 3RB.

Partners are also welcome to all coffee mornings

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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.

Friday 6th May 2022 will be an RPCSG meeting by Zoom featuring a talk by Dr Steve Allen on Pain Management.

Tuesday 17th May 2022 will be a walk from Pangbourne starting at 10:15 a.m.

Tuesday 24th May 2022 will be a coffee morning at The Cunning Man from 11:45 a.m.

Friday 27th May 2022 will be an RPCSG meeting. Details will be available later.