

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE JUNE 2022 MEETING

The June meeting was due to be held on the 3rd June but was brought forward by one week on account of the Bank Holiday for Platinum Anniversary celebrations. It was a hybrid meeting that started with RPCSG Committee member Dr Steve Allen who gave a very interesting talk about the different types of scanners and their capabilities. He showed many slides including some scans and demonstrated that interpretation of scans is very important. Then there was a Questions and Answers session with answers capably supplied by Andrew, Beverley and Steve Allen.

Steve described four main types of scanners and their capabilities:

CT SCANS Use X rays

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) uses magnetic fields

PET (Positron Emission Tomography) detect radiation

PSMA (Prostate Specific Membrane Androgen) detect radiation.

PET SCANS.

Cells thrive on glucose and cancer cells take up a larger amount than normal cells. Radioactive Fluorine 18 is introduced into the body and this attaches itself to glucose cells. Scans to detect the presence of the Fluorine reveal the areas of cellular activity. Interpretation of the scan finds areas of cell activity in places where there should be none.

Fluorine is not very useful for prostate cancer cells and a better material is Choline that is now used for prostate investigation.

PSMA SCANS

Steve showed diagrams of cells with receptors on their surface. Blood has a type of cells known as ligands that will only latch onto specific receptors. PSMA uses molecules that are designed to attach themselves to prostate cancer cell receptors and these molecules are tagged with radioactive Gallium 68. The PSMA scan looks for the Gallium 68 and the scan is often combined with CT scans that add anatomical detail to the scans.

However other cells than prostate cancer cells also pick up the ligand but the higher concentration of Gallium in cancer cells reveals the location of cancer cells.

PSMA scans are very useful for finding small metastases when hormone therapy is not working.

Steve showed a PSMA scan that showed a secondary of as little as 3mm diameter.

Steve said that this technique can be used for localised treatment by using a higher dose of radioactivity. This is sometimes called Theranostics, a combination of therapeutic and diagnostics.

MRI

MRI uses a high strength magnetic field that aligns the spins of protons. When the field is turned off the protons return to their normal position and give a small radio signal that is detected by the MRI scanner, yielding information about the cells.

A Question and Answer session then took place, at which the following answers were given:

SABR (Stereotactic Ablative Body Radiotherapy) is a form of external beam radiotherapy. It uses pencil thin beam of higher power and is more suitable for smaller cancer sites. At one time special machines were needed for this treatment but it can now be delivered by modern LINAC (linear accelerator) machines. CYBERKNIFE is a brand name of a SABR machine and can track any movement of the target site during treatment.

LINAC used to be done in 37 sessions. It has become apparent that prostate cancer cells are more vulnerable to high power X-rays so fewer sessions are now needed and 37 can be reduced to 20 sessions. The quantity of sessions can be further reduced with SABR.

The accuracy of radiotherapy beams has improved by better targeting and masking.

PSMA treatment is not yet available on the NHS and has had very good outcomes in the US. The half-life of PSMA used as treatment is 11 days.

PSMA scans can be carried out at Oxford and Mount Vernon as well as London hospitals.

PSMA as a treatment is unlikely to replace hormones completely and we still need drugs for highly advanced cancers. We need to pick up cancer instances much earlier as it would not only save lives but also saves money in the long run

For the future we need a selective androgen receptor blocker specifically for prostate cancer.

Any new treatment including the use of PSMA for treatment would need many years of testing and long term assessment before obtaining approval for general use. Multi modal therapy is becoming possible by the use of such drugs as Enzalutamide, Abiraterone and Apalutamide in conjunction with hormone therapy and chemotherapy.

Surgery should continue as a treatment option for years to come, whilst new treatments could develop for treating certain types of cancer.

Many trusts are withdrawing incontinence products completely and obtaining pads from the NHS is quite difficult.

Steve, Beverley and Andrew were thanked for their most interesting and informative contributions.

The next group meeting will be on the 5th August with members meeting in the church hall and a Zoom connection for those preferring to attend remotely. A guest speaker is being arranged and details and a Zoom link will be available nearer to the date.



AWARENESS DAY ON SATURDAY 2ND JULY

We will hold another Awareness Day in Reading this year, on the 2nd July 2022. We have reserved our favourite spot that is outside Marks & Spencer in Broad Street, Reading. As usual the stand will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. using our gazebo and much printed material. It will be greatly appreciated if you can help at the stand at some time during the day. If so will you please get in touch with Chairman Chris Addison by email on chairman@rpcsg.org.uk. The more helpers that we have will make a more effective stand. Many thanks to those members who have already volunteered.

RPCSG WALKS

A walk in June starting at the Flower Pot was most enjoyable with six participants. The weather and the views were superb.

The July walk will be on the 12th July starting at 10:30 a.m. from the Barley Mow Slipway car park on Sprat's Hatch Lane that is about two miles south of Hartley Wintney. From Hartley Wintney travel south on The Hurst in the direction of Dogmersfield until you arrive at the Barley Mow crossroads where you turn right into Sprat's Hatch Lane and take an almost immediate left turn into the free car park.

If using a satnav set it for RG27 8DE that will take you a little to the north of the Barley Mow crossroads.

Any queries please ring Richard Brown on 07973 662925.

COFFEE MORNINGS

The June coffee morning was held at the Mill at Sonning with seven participants.

The July coffee morning will be at the Cunning Man on Tuesday 26th July from 11:45 a.m. The post code is RG30 3RB. Remember to record your car registration in the monitor inside the pub.

Photographs during the June walk:



Magnificent view over the deer park



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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 service.

DIARY DATES

Saturday 2nd July 2022 is our Awareness Day in Broad Street, Reading.

Tuesday 12th July 2022 will be a walk from the Barley Mow Slipway.

Tuesday 26th July 2022 will be a coffee morning at The Cunning Man.

Friday 5th August 2022 will be a hybrid group meeting. Details will be available later.