

# PHAROS

*A beacon of hope in the darkness*

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

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At the start of the November meeting, Pater Dawe advised of the parking position. Parking outside the church hall is still free but we can no longer park at the front of the hospital, nor in the Library car park that is next to the hall car park. Instead we have an arrangement with Melrose House for us to park free of charge in one of their car parks that is accessible from Watlington Street. A permit must be shown on the dashboard, permits are available at our desk inside the hall. The permit has a map showing the route to the car park.

Alex Miles then reminded the meeting about the Christmas social that will be held on the 6<sup>th</sup> December.

A guest at the meeting was Hilton Kavu of the Macmillan Trust. He said that help from Macmillan is available in the RBH Cancer Centre.

## THE NOVEMBER 2024 MEETING

The November meeting was a Question & Answer session. These are great opportunities to receive answers to questions without the formality of arranging a consultation.

The nurses providing the answers were Beverley Skelton and Tessa Martin. Both of them are senior nurses with a great deal of experience in urology and prostate cancer.

The first slide shown is reproduced on the right and is a list of normal PSA values that are expected by age. This slide started a huge interest in the subject and many questions were asked on the subject of PSA values.

AGE RANGE (years)	NORMAL PSA (ng/ml)
All ages	<4.0
40 – 49	<2.5
50 – 59	<3.5
60 – 69	<4.5
>70	<6.5

The following is a summary of the facts that were given by the nurses in response to questions asked by the audience.

Before any PSA measurement test, avoid activities that can cause a temporary increase in the measurement. These include cycling or motorcycling, sexual activity, rectal examination, biopsy, and infections. After a biopsy one should wait at least 4-6 weeks before a PSA measurement.

After treatment it is usual to measure PSA at intervals of 3 months, six months and 9 months and thereafter annually. If the PSA starts to rise then measurements at 6 to 8 week intervals may be recommended. especially if the Gleason Grade was high at diagnosis.

Various treatments are available, there is no 'one size' treatment.

Metastasis is the spread of prostate cancer to other regions. Prostate cancer metastasis to the bones is common. If PSA measurement and MRI scans reveal anything suspicious, a bone scan would be carried out.

PSA measurements are recommended for anyone over the age of 50. If there is a family history of prostate cancer then PSA measurements at age of 40 should be available. Some GPs are reluctant to authorise measurements, but a patient should persist if he desires a measurement, and it is mandatory for a GP to grant a PSA measurement for any man over the age of 50.

The 'floor' of PSA measurements was as low as 0.002 and later raised to 0.006. The floor is now 0.025 so that any result lower than this is usually stated as 'less than 0.025'.

After discharge from hospital PSA monitoring, a patient is under the care of their GP and PSA measurements are arranged via the GP. The NHS is happy to carry out the measurements for ever. It was said that there is a lateral flow home test available at cost. However these do not give a value, they are a simple 'yes or no' result for a set level of PSA.

The value of PSA is not as important as its stability.

There have been improvements in the path to diagnosis over time. Sensitive MRI scans are now available and are used before a biopsy, this enables more accurately targeted biopsies. If a biopsy finds benign tumour but an MRI shows some suspicious areas, a more extensive biopsy would be carried out. Biopsies are now carried in a safer way.

Beverley and Tessa were thanked for their replies to all of the questions that arose.

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## THE DECEMBER 2024 MEETING

The December meeting was the annual Christmas Social. It was very well attended, with the buffet meal provided by the caterer Little Platter, who we used for the Christmas social last year. Thanks to Beverley and Nigel for managing the raffle that raised money to help towards the cost of the event, and for Alex for arranging the buffet meal and the quiz.



*Walking through Forbury Gardens on the way to the Abbey ruins*



*At the Christmas Social*

## RPCSG WALKS

A very pleasant walk attended by 11 members was held in November from the Waterside Centre to Reading centre via Caversham. The walk included the Forbury Gardens and a visit to the Abbey ruins.

A further walk was held in December attended by three members, starting at Sheffield Bottom Lock, near to Theale. The walk was most enjoyable with good weather, and a refreshment stop was made at the Fox & Hounds. The walk was about 4 miles.

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