

# PHAROS

*A beacon of hope in the darkness*

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

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The January 2025 meeting was our usual Open Meeting to start the year. This meeting was well attended and a great opportunity for members to talk amongst themselves.

At the start of the February meeting a particular welcome was made to four new members. Treasurer Richard Joyes mentioned the refreshments rota and made a request for volunteers to join the rota of helpers at the tea and coffee counter.

Committee member Andrew Gabriel then gave a very interesting and informative talk titled '*Surviving Hormone Therapy*' and included some personal detail of his experiences. The talk was accompanied by comprehensive slides concerning aspects of hormone treatment. Hormone treatments work by either preventing the manufacture of testosterone in the body, or by inhibiting the effect of testosterone on cancer cells.



Andrew talked about Bicalutamide which is a therapy that works for many men, usually up to two years, and the more powerful GnRH hormone therapy medications which can be used for longer. He talked through a list of possible side effects of hormone treatment, which included some initial pain, and hot flushes which are a common side effect that affect the majority of men during hormone treatment. Sufferers of hot flushes were advised on a number of ways to reduce or handle hot flushes, including complimentary therapies and prescription medications you can ask for.

Other side effects include breast growth and fat gain. A balanced diet can ease side effects and should have an increase in protein and a reduction of carbohydrates. The role of exercise is stressed as an important factor in coping with hormone treatment, and in fact is advised during any form of prostate cancer treatment. Tamoxifen could be requested to prevent breast gland growth and pain.

There are a set of advanced hormone therapy drugs. Abiraterone is one of these, but NICE recently refused to allow it to be prescribed to men with high risk disease on a curative treatment path, despite it being available for this in many other countries, and a recent dramatic reduction in price.

Hormone treatment can result in loss of libido, and tablets such as Tadalafil can help, and to preserve sexual function when you are on time-limited hormone therapy. There are others which can be requested if Tadalafil gives unacceptable side effects. It is advisable to try the different 4-8 times to judge the effectiveness of each, as they might not work every time. Regular use of a pump was also recommended, although they are not available on the NHS in Bucks, Oxon, Berks, something we have tried to fix but without success so far.

Andrew was thanked for his most informative talk.

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## RPCSG WALKS AND COFFEE MEETS

A very pleasant walk attended by 11 members was held in January, starting from the Waterside Centre to visit Reading centre via Caversham. A refreshment stop was made at The Griffin pub in Caversham.

The February walk was well attended, around the lakes at Dinton Pastures and finishing at the café.



*Walking through King's Meadow park towards Caversham*

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