

KNEBORTH AND MARYMEAD MEDICAL PRACTICE

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER

August 2019

HELP YOURSELF TO HEALTH, 24TH JULY – A RETROSPECTIVE

How did we again manage to choose one of the hottest days of the year for our annual Meeting? But it didn't seem to matter; we had an audience of about a hundred, including a good turnout from the Practice, with both clinical and support staff present.



The rear section of the Village Hall was given over to our many stallholders who had come along to display and talk about their speciality groups or products. After wandering around the stalls, and taking on board the hot or cold drinks that were available, the audience settled down to listen to the wide selection of talks.

After welcoming everyone to the Meeting, our chairman for the evening, Joy Hall, opened proceedings with an overview of the numerous PPG interests and activities and reminded patients that they are always welcome to attend our meetings or to join in the Health Walks.

The first speaker, Dr Mark Massyn, a Stroke Consultant from the Lister Hospital, gave us an insight into aspects of the presentation, treatment and after-care of the many different types of stroke that he encounters on a daily basis. Unfortunately, he was confronted with a technical problem relating to his projection material and this detracted slightly from his presentation. Next came a short talk from Joanie Scott who organises a support group in Welwyn for working-age stroke survivors and their carers. Her daughter, Sarah, suffered a stroke at the age of 18 and Joanie herself has had a stroke. Their group, which is affiliated to The Stroke Association, meets regularly in The North Star at Welwyn.

The next speaker, Dr Julie Sharp, the Head of Health and Patient Information at Cancer Research UK, gave a stimulating presentation around the resources that are available, particularly through their organisation, for anyone wishing to obtain information on the prevention and early diagnosis of different forms of the disease.

This was followed by a short presentation from Brenda Davies who, as a result of the care that she received at the Royal Brompton Hospital, joined as a member of their NHS Trust and urged others to follow suit. She also eventually became a Patient Governor for Herts and Beds. We were then treated to an informative session from Dr Rob Newby, one of our own GPs, explaining how to get the most out of your ten-minute GP consultation. Basically, he urged that we be prepared, be focussed, be direct, ask questions, and be informed, but especially make sure that we are clear what will happen next.

The evening concluded, as is now a regular feature of our annual meetings, with a review by Ken Spooner, our Practice Manager, of the previous year and a look at future within the Practice. Highlighted in this was the important role of our Advanced Nurse Practitioners and the progress made by the frailty clinics run by Dr Caroline Shaw which are proving most successful. And, of course, Ken couldn't end without mentioning the new surgery development at Knebworth which is scheduled for completion by the end of the year.

The following are rather more detailed articles relating to three of the presentations:

Aspects of Cancer (Dr Julie Sharp; Cancer Research UK)

Cancer Research UK has a vast database of information that is sourced by millions of people every year through its website, by enquiries of their nurse helpline or on its Cancer Chat Forum. Their information is presented in a very user-friendly way; the website has about seven thousand pages, the text is written by cancer nurses, it is presented in plain English and it contains lots of videos and animations.

Cancer prevention may sometimes be possible and there is good evidence that about 40% of cases can be prevented. It often means a change in life-style, such as stopping smoking, keeping a healthy weight, avoidance of excessive sunlight and drinking less alcohol.

As well as prevention, early diagnosis is important and some cancer screening programmes are available. However, if you notice something abnormal, don't just try to explain away the changes, see your doctor and don't worry that you think you may be wasting the GP's time.

If you have any questions about cancer then do visit the Cancer Research UK website at www.cruk.org/about-cancer or call the nurse helpline on 0808 800 4040 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm).

Living with Stroke – a Personal View (Joanie Scott)

My daughter, Sarah, suffered a stroke at the age of 18 and while still at school; she was treated at the QEII in Welwyn Garden City and at the Lister Hospital in Stevenage, followed by rehabilitation at the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital in Welwyn. I, too, survived a stroke two years after Sarah had hers.

As a result of this, we started a support group in Welwyn for working-age stroke survivors, particularly those with communication difficulties, and their carers. We meet on the first Saturday of every month at the North Star Pub in Welwyn.

Sarah has aphasia and appeared in the Channel 4 series 'The Undateables.' We have a YouTube channel showing her recovery that has over two million views and is used worldwide to train medical students.

We have appeared on TV and radio to raise awareness of stroke and the FAST campaign, and have spoken in Parliament about communication being a basic human right and about the financial impact of stroke.

We have also been to Poland, Australia and the USA to present at stroke conferences and I ran a workshop for carers at a Stroke Association conference. I was also the recipient of the 2017 Robin Tavistock award from The Tavistock Trust for Aphasia, given by the Duchess of Bedford.

Getting the Most Out of Your GP Consultation (Dr Robert Newby)

It's important to realise that your consultation is a two-way discussion. Clearly, time is short and every consultation is different, but there are things that patients can do to ensure the effectiveness and safety of the discussion.

From the patient's perspective, you should prepare well for the appointment and be focussed. you should provide the doctor with as much information as possible the chronology (time course) of the problem – perhaps having made written notes beforehand. It is also helpful to have a list your medications and to mention if you have seen any other healthcare professionals about the problem. If the consultation might involve a physical examination, be prepared for this. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Bring someone else with you if you think this would help.

Finally, at the end of the consultation, make sure that you know what will happen next – it might be for you to carefully observe the course of the symptoms, there may be a follow-up appointment scheduled or there could be a referral to another healthcare professional.

FORTHCOMING PPG MEETINGS

The next PPG Meeting will be on Tuesday, 24th September at 7.00 pm at Knebworth Surgery. All patients are welcome to attend, you don't have to be a signed-up member of the PPG. The Meetings are usually over within an hour.

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