

# HUG MAGAZINE



**April 2009**

(issued bi-monthly)

For HAEMATOLOGY and ONCOLOGY patients, being treated in the Day Therapy Centre and Dove Ward or under review



Le Spa at Cirencester where 4 members recently had a treatment

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**H.U.G. SWINDON**  
HAEMATOLOGY/ONCOLOGY UNITED GROUP, G.W.H.

## H.U.G. Swindon Get-Togethers

We meet in the Academy (at the back of the Hospital), Room Number as shown on the second Thursday of the month.

Turn up at any time between  
10:00 am and 12:30 pm unless otherwise stated:

**14<sup>th</sup> May 2009 – Seminar Room 1**

**11<sup>th</sup> June 2009 – Seminar Room 1**

**9<sup>th</sup> July 2009 – Seminar Room 7**

### AIMS

**HUG aims to improve the environment for patients of the Day Therapy Centre and Dove Unit or under review following treatment in these areas at the Great Western Hospital, Swindon by:**

- ❖ **Holding regular “get-togethers” where Haematology and Oncology patients and their relatives can make friends, share their views and experiences and receive information about hospital and other relevant services, in an informal atmosphere over refreshments.**
- ❖ **Producing the HUG Magazine, a light-hearted and informative bi-monthly publication and making it available in Dove Unit, the Day Therapy Centre the Osprey Waiting Area and Wren Ward.**
- ❖ **Pointing patients in the direction of specialist help, as required.**
- ❖ **Following up on comments about Hospital Services and reporting back on progress made.**
- ❖ **Fund-raising to provide items for the benefit of patients. We have provided mugs, bookshelves, room redecoration materials, purchased Christmas gifts, magnifying glasses and slippers for patients and donated to Dove Ward Charitable funds,. Ideas are welcomed at any time for future projects.**
- ❖ **Maintaining a website to promote the group.**

### **Get-Togethers away from the Hospital**

**In addition to the get-togethers at the Hospital, as advertised above, we meet for coffee and a spot of lunch, for anyone who wants it, at least once a month. Contact Irene for the next location, date and time, if you would prefer to meet us, in another environment. We are a small friendly group, who would make you very welcome.**

# INTERESTING MEDICAL NEWS

**Acupuncture wrist bands may alleviate nausea caused by chemotherapy**  
Here's one suggestion those of us currently undergoing treatment might be able to test out for ourselves. Acupuncture wristbands, which apply force to a pressure point on the wrist, are usually used to treat travel sickness. Doctors at Liverpool University believe that they could also help to control nausea caused by chemotherapy and they are currently carrying out a trial. Professor Mari Lloyd-Williams is leading the trial.

This is a drug-free therapy that would be worth a try, subject to clinical approval!  
Daily Mail, 24 March 2009

## **Cancer Reform Strategy and Cure Rates**

**As widely reported in the press, the first annual report of the national Cancer Reform Strategy has been produced and outlines the progress made so far. Key targets include smoking, the Sunsmart campaign, the Human Papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination programme and the National Awareness and Early Diagnosis Initiatives (NAEDI).**

**Detailed results of the first national survey to measure awareness of cancer symptoms will be published this spring. In the meantime a report from EUROCARE-4 has shown that cure rates are improving for most types of cancer. It has been widely published that the UK is well down the European tables for cure rates. Dr Lesley Walker, director of cancer information at Cancer Research UK, says that the statistics produced "should not be seen as a league table of cancer survival in Europe". She points out that figures are not directly comparable because they are collected in different ways from country to country. Dr Walker noted that there are variations in the early diagnosis and treatment of cancer patients between the UK and other countries in Europe, but that we still do not know the extent of these differences and the reason for their existence.**

Various press sources

## **Macmillan campaign against fuel poverty among cancer patients**

Following the successful campaign to obtain free prescriptions for cancer patients, Macmillan's latest campaign is related to fuel poverty among cancer patients whose income is severely reduced by their illness. We couldn't see anything on their website as yet.

## **A gel that could save hair loss as a result of radiotherapy**

**A new gel has been developed by MitoS Pharmaceuticals to prevent hair loss and damage to the scalp resulting from radiotherapy treatment. It is also being studied as a topical agent to prevent radiation damage to other areas of skin.**

**Dr James Metz is carrying out trials at the University of Pennsylvania. He considers that an intravenous form could help to protect the salivary glands during radiation to the mouth for head and neck cancers.**

Daily Mail, 20 January 2009

## **Comments from HUG members on the article in the last issue**

### **WAS IT ALL WORTH IT???**

**By MS, GWH patient**

You may have read M's article in the February edition of the HUG Magazine. Her experiences during cancer treatment were not ideal and we discussed at HUG whether we thought they were typical.

M was given her diagnosis by telephone, but we know that this is definitely not normal procedure and really not acceptable. It may have been necessary in her circumstances because a CT scan showed that she needed urgent surgery and a bed had become available.

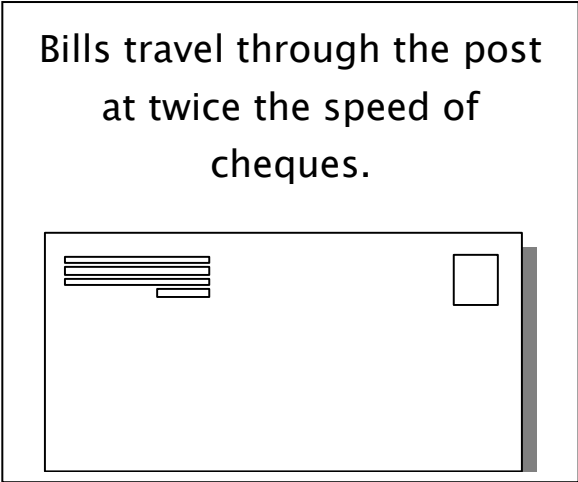
The operation turned out to require more major surgery than had been expected, which clearly would have left her feeling really poorly. This may have accounted for her not being told enough about the possible side effects of the chemotherapy that followed. HUG members felt that we had all been given sufficient details about the possible side effects in advance of chemo, and some of us had also done some internet searches to check it out. This route is not available to everyone, and of course, you are obviously not going to surf the net for information, if you are feeling quite ill, as M was.

As far as infections are concerned, we all know someone who has had a post-operation or post-chemotherapy infection and reading national press reports of serious instances of hospital acquired infections is practically a weekly event. One member was told about the possibility of infection and nerve damage before her biopsy. She was given a disclaimer to sign to state that she had been made aware (pre- diagnosis and before her first visit to the Haematology Department), so patients can certainly be made aware of the possibility very early on. Given that M had bowel surgery, the chances of infection, as she says herself, were definitely higher.

We do know that the GWH is making great efforts to encourage patients, visitors and staff to use the anti-bacterial hand washes, as an aid to reduction of infection rates. Unfortunately we have still heard of recent instances of clinical staff not doing so between patients. If you think that someone attending to you may not have cleaned their hands appropriately, you are within your rights to insist that they do so. And of course your own personal hygiene and that of your visitors is equally important. You can find the Trust's policy on screening for MRSA on the website at:

[www.swindon-marlborough.nhs.uk/](http://www.swindon-marlborough.nhs.uk/)

Throughout her article, M stressed how kind and caring staff were during her hospitalisation and day therapy treatment. This is almost exclusively the experience of our HUG members.



# How To Plant Your Garden



1. Plant three rows of peas:



Peace of mind, peace of heart, peace of soul

2. Plant four rows of squashes:



Squash gossip, squash indifference, squash grumbling, squash selfishness

3. Plant three rows of lettuces:



Lettuce be kind, lettuce be patient, lettuce be nice to one another

4. No garden should be without turnips:



Turnip for work, turnip for meetings, turnip to help one another

## 5. To finish off our garden we need some thyme:



Thyme for each other, thyme for family, thyme for friends

Some approaches to adopt, even if you are NOT a gardener!



### Room for a short quiz

1. Which two-time chart-topping song begins “Is this the real life?”?
2. Which military disaster is commemorated by the poem which begins “Half a league, Half a league, Half a league onwards”?
3. Which king’s last words are said to have been “Do not let poor Nelly starve”?
4. Name all three presenters of The Generation Game.
5. In Greece, honey, nuts and filo pastry is known as what?
6. What is the theme tune of the US basketball team, the Harlem Globetrotters?
7. Of which country is Jaipur the capital?
8. Which city hosted the 1900 Olympic Games?
9. Which website was founded by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger in 2001?
10. Which country has the Grosz as its monetary unit?

Answers on Page 9

# H.U.G. News – read all about it

Get-togethers were held at the Great Western on 12<sup>th</sup> February and 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009 in the Academy at the GWH, with Coffee Mornings at the Blunsdon Arms at the end of February and March.

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## **1. Recent Get-Togethers**

We seem to have had lots of things for members to discuss at the February and March get-togethers. A couple of those are mentioned on the back page.

We have been discussing obtaining shirts or sweatshirts which would identify us while we are at the hospital and when we are fund-raising. Suggestions for the design have been put forward, but full agreement has not yet been reached.

## **2. Events**

Four members were able to enjoy a visit to the luxurious surroundings of Le Spa at Cheltenham, after we were given a voucher to use “for the benefit of patients”. It was decided that it would be more sociable and also fairer to allow a group of members to go for short treatments, rather than one member for a longer session. We supplemented the voucher with a small additional amount from funds to enable four members to go. Two opted for back and shoulder massages, one for a manicure and one for reflexology. All were very impressed with the wonderfully relaxing atmosphere in the treatment rooms, created with the aid of candles and heated treatment beds.

We then went to the Bistro for refreshments. One member’s day was definitely made when Patsy Palmer (Bianca in East Enders) came in and said hello to us. Apparently she is a regular visitor there.

## **4. Donation**

We have received a donation of £50 from a lady whose brother is having cancer treatment at the GWH. She did not leave her contact details, but thank you very much indeed. We hope to put it to very good use.

## **4. Spending**

The strong and hopefully unbreakable magnifying glasses, for use by patients in Dove Ward, were duly delivered at the end of the February Get-Together. We are sure that they will be useful to patients.

In the meantime a suggestion has come from both a staff member and a patient’s relative for kettles for Dove rooms. Currently patients need to bring their own if they want to be able to have a cuppa when they feel like it, without bothering busy staff. We have asked if we could purchase these.

We expect the needs for purchases for Day Therapy to change, because some alterations are going to be done there. Details are not known as yet.



## NHS FOUNDATION TRUST – MORE MEMBERS WANTED

As you will already know, the Trust achieved Foundation Trust status, from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008. Although still part of the NHS, the Trust now reports to Parliament via the regulator of foundation trusts. The Trust is primarily responsible to its members which should make it more responsive to local needs.

It has not yet reached its target of 15,000 members to represents the community which it serves. Personal letters have been sent out recently to some current patients to try to get them interested. If you want your opinion to count, you too can become a member. Benefits include eligibility to vote in governor elections, receipt of regular updates of Trust news and invitations to open days and other events, plus eligibility for NHS discounts. To find out more, or to obtain a membership application contact details are as follows:

Email: [foundationtrust@gwh.nhs.uk](mailto:foundationtrust@gwh.nhs.uk)

Telephone: 01793 604185

Office: Foundation Trust Membership Office  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
The Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Marlborough Road  
Swindon SN3 6BB

### Look Good, Feel Better

Remember, if you would be interested in a session of skin-care and make-up ideas at Maggie's in Oxford, do contact us. We will try to make all the arrangements, including transport. You don't have to be a HUG regular to join us for this, but to have been affected in some way by cancer.

### Quiz answers

1. Bohemian Rhapsody;
2. The Charge of the Light Brigade;
3. Charles II;
4. Bruce Forsyth, Larry Grayson, Jim Davidson;
5. Baklava;
6. Sweet Georgia Brown;
7. Rajasthan;
8. Paris;
9. Wikipedia;
10. Poland

### **Sponsored slim for HUG funds**

Well, HUG member YR completed her sponsored slim, over slightly more than 8 weeks, from 1<sup>st</sup> February to 1<sup>st</sup> April. We are delighted to report that she has lost 18lbs and expects to donate £276 to HUG funds, when she has collected from everyone. Her family and friends have been very impressed by her commitment, especially since she intends to keep up the good work and lose even more weight. A marvellous effort, Y!

### **Go the Extra Smile**

No doubt you have seen the smiley faces and posters both outside and inside the Great Western Hospital, as part of the "Go the Extra Smile" campaign. When we talked about this at the March meeting, some lively discussions ensued.

One member felt quite strongly that money should not be spent on encouraging staff to smile, when they should be doing so anyway. A few words from a supervisor should do the trick. Others felt that sometimes they might need to be reminded, particularly when under stress. Artificial smiles and the insincere "Have a nice day" can be annoying, so perhaps it's better to have a natural and sincere approach.

Actually we have no idea how much has been allocated to the campaign, but will try to find out for the next issue.

### **Jade Goody**

Whether we loved, felt indifferent or hated her style before her illness, we had to admit that Jade raised the profile of cervical cancer and actually died with dignity. Perhaps most of us would have wanted a little more privacy in the final stages of her illness, but that was how she lived.

Her legacy is that she has made women much more aware of the possible symptoms, as well as providing for her family. Requests for screening have soared in recent weeks, and this must be a good thing.

### **Modern Matrons**

Do you know what a modern matron is? We didn't either, until we read about them in the Pulse Foundation Trust Membership Magazine. It turns out that they are senior sisters, responsible for quality care, staffing, cleanliness, patients' nutritional needs, preventing infections, empowering nurses to take on more clinical roles and resolving problems for patients and relatives. To date they are usually ward-based at the Great Western.

