

Peterborough Breast Cancer Support Group Newsletter

(www.pbcsg.co.uk)

MEETING HELD AT
THE HOLIDAY INN 7.00 PM TO 9.00 PM on 06/10/2022



Thank you everyone for coming to the meeting and welcome to the new member of the Group who joined us for the first time. There were no representatives from the PCH specialist Care Nurse Team this month. Representatives will be attending next month.

Our guest speaker was Rosie Callcott, lead lymphedema nurse. She gave a very thorough and informative talk about lymphedema. She explained there are two sets of vessels in the body, blood and lymphatic. The lymphatic system is a network of delicate tubes throughout the body. It drains fluid (called lymph) that has leaked from the blood vessels into the tissues and empties it back into the bloodstream via the lymph nodes.

The main roles of the lymphatic system include:

- managing the fluid levels in the body
- reacting to bacteria
- dealing with cancer cells
- dealing with cell products that otherwise would result in disease or disorders
- absorbing some of the fats in our diet from the intestine.

She stressed the importance of maintaining gentle exercises as lymphedema can occur long after initial surgery. She advised the exercises given by the physiotherapist after surgery should be maintained. She warned against repetitive exercises which can cause issues. She advised that good skin care was crucial to include not having injections in the affected arm, being careful not to have cuts in the affected arm. She emphasised trying not to break the skin. She said swimming was a very good form of exercise. She said it is important to find a balance between exercising and not putting the affected arm under too much exertion. She also advised massaging the scar tissue. She also said it was good to try and maintain good shoulder movement.

There can be delay after surgery before lymphedema shows. In 50-60% of cases this can be 18 months or two years later before swelling is noticed. A trigger could be an infection or blood clot. You may have very mild swelling and not notice it. The swelling could be reactive. There can be a build-up of scar tissue, where the scar tissue becomes tighter. Again, to prevent this gentle exercises should be maintained.

Rosie talked about the treatments available.

- **Exercises.** Gentle contraction of the muscles in the arm or leg can help move the excess fluid out of the swollen limb.
- **Manual lymph drainage.** Therapists trained in this massage-like technique use very light pressure to move the trapped fluid in the swollen limb toward an area with working lymph vessels. People should avoid manual lymph drainage if they have a skin infection, blood clots or active cancer in the affected limb.
- **Compression bandages.** Using low-stretch bandages to wrap the entire limb encourages lymph fluid to flow back toward the trunk of the body.

- **Compression garments.** Close-fitting elastic sleeves or stockings can compress the arm or leg to encourage lymph fluid drainage. These garments often require a prescription to ensure that the proper amount of compression is used. You may need to be measured by a professional to ensure proper fit.
- LED light therapy

A question and answer session followed.

November Meeting

Munashe Munyukwi who is the MacMillan Engagement Lead for Beds, Cambs and Herts will be coming to speak to us in November about services available and what support can be offered to support groups like ours in relation to funding etc.

CLARE HALL – RETIRING

As many of you know Clare (breast care nurse) is retiring in November. She is coming to our November meeting so it will be lovely if as many as possible can attend the meeting to wish Clare all the best and to see her on her way into a very happy and well deserved retirement.

FUTURE MEETINGS AT THE HOLIDAY INN 7.00 PM TO 9.00 PM £2 payable on the night for refreshments

3rd November 2022 Munashe Munyukwi – New MacMillan Engagement Lead

1st December 2022 – Xmas party and secret Santa

No meeting in January.

See you all in November

Helen

If anyone would like to contribute to the Newsletter, please contact Helen Saggars at helen.saggars@ntlworld.com or call on 07790856801. If you would like to see up to date and relevant information on our website please email our website administrator/provider susan@bluemonkey.it

Other key contacts:

Macmillan Volunteer for breast cancer advice: Val 01733 267500

Peterborough Breast Cancer Support Group website: www.pbcsg.co.uk and www.peterboroughbreastcancersupportgroup.co.uk.