Peterborough Breast Cancer Support Group Newsletter

(www.pbcsg.co.uk)

THE HOLIDAY INN 1st JUNE 2023

Hello to all members. It was nice to see everyone at the June meeting.

To start on an admin point I confirm I have signed up for another 12 months at The Holiday Inn to secure a room for our meetings, so there should always be a room available. I can't guarantee which room. The Holiday Inn has put the cost of refreshments up to £3.50 per head with a minimum of £35 per month. They are not in effect charging us for the room hire. The £2 subs unfortunately do not cover the whole cost, the shortfall comes out of the Group's funds. I have submitted a grant application to Macmillan. I included the costs of the venue. I don't know yet if we will secure the funds. I will keep you posted.

I have been in contact with the Breast Care Nurses, due to ongoing pressure of work we have agreed that representatives from the Team will join us at our October meeting. It was also agreed with the nurses that they would hand our leaflet to patients at the time of diagnosis. Historically they have been handed out to every post-operative patient. I had thought they were being handed out at the time of diagnosis.

As always there was plenty to talk about at the meeting. Emotions and mental health were again a topic of discussion. I mentioned in May's Newsletter the book by Toni Lindsay "Cancer Companion: How to Navigate Your way from Diagnosis to Treatment and Beyond". I have obtained a copy so will bring it to the July meeting if anyone would like to borrow it. I think it's good that as a Group we continue to talk about emotional and mental health issues. It is sometimes easier to soldier on and suppress our feelings. A colleague at work who has just finished her treatment for ovarian cancer after having breast cancer a few years ago said to me that she has put on so many different faces during her treatment so as not to burden or upset her close ones. She has done amazingly well and worked throughout but now the treatment has finished her anxiety levels are high. It is the fear of "what if it comes back again". Fear is very disabling and real. It is easy to say just live for the moment but when you have loved ones, and many have dependants it's not that easy. The more we talk and share our fears and feelings with each other the better for us all. We shouldn't also feel guilty if we do get down or depressed. It's not being selfish to recognise we need some "me-time". The road to recovery is an ongoing process.

Breast cancer has been in the news and on the TV recently. I saw the article below in the Guardian which makes encouraging reading.

"Women diagnosed with early breast cancer are 66% less likely to die from the disease than they were 20 years ago, and most can expect to become "long-term survivors", according to the largest study of its kind.

Research from the University of Oxford reveals that the risk of death within five years of diagnosis was 14.4% for women diagnosed between 1993 and 1999.

This fell to 4.9% for women diagnosed between 2010 and 2015, according to the findings published in the BMJ.

For some women the risk of death within five years is as low as 0.2%, according to the large-scale research.

The proportion of women who survive the disease has improved substantially since the 1990s, experts found. Cancer Research UK, which funded the study, said the figures were "heart-warming" and would come as reassuring news to women with breast cancer.

Researchers, led by academics at the University of Oxford, tracked survival rates in half a million women diagnosed with breast cancer in England between 1993 and 2015.

The authors mostly examined cases where breast cancer had not spread beyond the breast.

They then tracked the cases to assess their risk of death five years after their diagnosis – when the risk of

death from breast cancer was found to be highest.

“The prognosis for women diagnosed with early invasive breast cancer has improved substantially since the 1990s,” the authors wrote.

“Most can expect to be long-term cancer survivors.”

Dr Carolyn Taylor, a professor of oncology at Oxford Population Health and lead author of the paper, said: “Our study is good news for the overwhelming majority of women diagnosed with early breast cancer today because their prognosis has improved so much. “Their risk of dying from their breast cancer in the first five years after diagnosis is now 5%.

“It can also be used to estimate risk for individual women in the clinic. Our study shows that prognosis after a diagnosis of early breast cancer varies widely, but patients and clinicians can use these results to predict accurate prognosis moving forward.

“In the future, further research may be able to reduce the breast cancer death rates for women diagnosed with early breast cancer even more.”

Some of the potential drivers in the improvement in survival rates could include new treatments, improved radiotherapy, better detection and breast screening and studies which have uncovered varying characteristics of breast cancer, experts said.

Cancer Research UK said this was the first study of this size with an extended follow-up to not only track which women died from their disease but map out characteristics of the patients and their cancer.

The charity said that meant doctors would be able to use it to provide an accurate prognosis for women.

The paper states that among 15,533 women aged 50 to 70 with “screen-detected cancer that was HER2 negative, oestrogen receptor positive, medium grade, size 1-20 mm, and node negative” the average risk of death in five years was just 0.5%.

And the estimated five-year breast cancer mortality risk for a 60-year-old woman diagnosed with a “screen-detected tumour, (less than) 20mm (in size), low grade, oestrogen receptor positive, HER2 negative, and node negative” would be only 0.2%.

The researchers analysed different characteristics of the disease and found that for 63% of women, the risk of dying within five years was lower than 3%. But for 4.6% of women, the risk was 20% or higher.

Cancer Research UK’s chief executive, Michelle Mitchell, said: “It’s heart-warming news that women today have more time with their families and loved ones after an early breast cancer diagnosis.

“Receiving any cancer diagnosis is an extremely worrying time, but this study can give patients a more accurate prognosis and offer reassurance for many women”

“Through the power of science, research, clinical trials and screening over the last 20 years, huge improvements have been made in cancer diagnosis and treatment. However, the UK lags behind other countries when it comes to cancer survival.

“The governments across the UK must show political leadership in cancer by taking action to help diagnose and treat cancers earlier and ensure the NHS has enough staff and equipment to meet the growing demands of the future.

Some of you may have watched “Sarah Beeney vs Cancer” on Channel 4 this month. Sarah lost her own mother to breast cancer aged 39, when Sarah was 10. She said she had been waiting for it to happen to her. Although she did not have the BRCA gene she was tested positive for another cancer gene. The documentary was open, honest and in the end hopeful. Worth a watch if you have not seen it.

We have a speaker for our July Meeting, Catherine Curtis from Eloise Lingerie will be joining us.

For our September meeting I have arranged for Lisa-Marie Butler to join us. She is a Pilates teacher. She is does a specific Breast Cancer Recovery Programme to help with such things as lymphedema and post-surgery exercises. Her presentation will be a mix of a talk, demonstration, and audience participation - nothing too strenuous and entirely optional.

As you know we are having a social for our August meeting at the Bluebell Werrington. I will bring copies of the menu with me to the July meeting as we need to pre-order.

I look forward to seeing you all in July.

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

6th July – Catherine Curtiss – Eloise Lingerie
3rd August – Meal at the Bluebell Werrington
8th September – Lisa-Marie Butler – “Breathe Pilates”

Helen Saggers - PBCSG Co-ordinator.

If anyone would like to contribute to this Newsletter, please send information to Helen Saggers at helen.saggers@ntlworld.com or telephone 07790856801 or if you would like to see up to date and relevant information on our website please email our website provider/administrator susan@bluemonkey.it

Macmillan Volunteer for breast cancer advice: Val. Tel 01733 267005.
Peterborough Breast Cancer Support Group website is www.pbcsg.co.uk and www.peterboroughbreastcancerssupportgroup.co.uk