

**Peterborough Breast Cancer Support Group**  
**Newsletter**  
([www.pbcsg.co.uk](http://www.pbcsg.co.uk))



THE HOLIDAY INN 4th May 2023

Apologies for the tardiness in getting May's Newsletter out. The weeks have just flown by. I will get into the habit of writing the Newsletter in the week after our monthly meeting thereby ensuring it is sent in good time for our next meeting. I think the three bank holidays in one month has tipped me into semi-permanent holiday mode. I could get used to working a four day week.

Thank you for all those who attended May's meeting. There was plenty to chat about and lots of things to share. One big topic we discussed was the menopause and how this has affected most in the group. It was discussed that breast cancer treatment caused members to enter menopause prematurely. The change in hormone levels and estrogen reduction caused for example by chemotherapy or hormonal therapy can trigger side effects associated with the menopause. Hot flushes were raised as one significant side effect, and these can go on for years after treatment has stopped. These can be triggered by heat, and stress and certain foods. The unpredictability and severity of the hot flushes can be debilitating and at times embarrassing to the extent you need to just get out of a room into some fresh air to cool down. As certain breast cancers mean that HRT cannot be given, alternative remedies are considered. One member suggested using Evening Primrose Oil or Black Cohosh. I looked the latter up as I had not heard of it. It is a flowering plant native to eastern North America. The roots were used by Native Americans in traditional medicine. It is a member of the buttercup family. There have been studies on the effectiveness of using it to help with menopausal symptoms. More recent studies seem to show that it does help to ease hot flushes. **It is however recommended that people with breast cancer should avoid using Black Cohosh before talking to their health care provider.** So, like with all things best to check with your doctor or consultant before taking any kind of alternative medicine.

If you are looking at foods that may help, foods like soya and flaxseeds have apparently been shown to reduce hot flushes.

One member mentioned acupuncture to ease symptoms. The Cancer Wellbeing Centre run a six-week course. The member said if you want to pay privately to see an Acupuncturist, fees are about £45 per session. Again, I did a bit on research on the effectiveness of this treatment. The British Medical Journal Open suggests it may be worth considering. A Danish study found that five weeks of acupuncture reduced hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disturbances and emotional problems. However, they could not rule out the placebo effect.

One issue raised by a member was anxiety and mood changes. Most members recognised this and felt that each day was a roller coaster of ups and downs, with some days seeing more downs than ups. We talked about self-care, the sense of pent-up tensions not being addressed. When going through the cancer treatment energy is focused on the treatment itself, hospital appointments, scans, blood tests, chemo, surgery, the pace is hard and gruelling, and often the emotional side can get suppressed as survival mode kicks in. It is often when the treatment has ended that, what I will call "battle fatigue" kicks in and the emotional trauma comes to the surface. It was discussed that these emotions need processing and even years after treatment depression can descend. One member talked

about how her recent counselling sessions have really helped her. Another member talked about feeling angry with everyone.

It is not surprising that with the trauma of a cancer diagnosis compounded by menopausal symptoms our emotional compass has thrown us way of course. The aim is to recognise this and reach out for support. Someone mentioned "The Cancer Companion: How to Navigate Your way from Diagnosis to Treatment and Beyond" a book by Toni Lindsay as a really helpful book to have in our tool kit.

Another member mentioned that some companies are having wellbeing days in the workplace and another the company have a menopause club that meets monthly. It was agreed that the stigma of being menopausal is slowly slipping away.

On an entirely different note, it was agreed that for our August meeting we would go out for a meal. The Bluebell Inn at 6 The Green Werrington has been booked for the 3<sup>rd</sup> August at 7.00 pm. There are sufficient funds in the pot to pay for the food. If you want to come, can you please either WhatsApp or email me. I will get a menu circulated.

I look forward to seeing you on the 1<sup>st</sup> June at 7.00 pm. The Breast Care Nurses were due to join us for the June meeting, however sadly due to staff shortages they are unable to send anyone.

FUTURE MEETINGS AT THE HOLDIAY INN 7.00 PM TO 9.00 PM  
£2 PAYABLE on the night for refreshments.

1<sup>st</sup> June 2023

6 July 2023 - Catherine Curtiss from Eloise Lingerie will be joining us with samples of underwear/swimwear

3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023 – Meal at the Blue Bell Inn

If anyone would like to contribute to the Newsletter, please contact Helen Saggars at [helen.saggars@ntlworld.com](mailto: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](mailto:susan@bluemonkey.it).

Other key contacts:

Macmillan Volunteer for breast cancer advice: Val 01733 267500

Peterborough Breast Cancer Support Group website: [www.pbscg.co.uk](http://www.pbscg.co.uk) and [www.peterboroughbreastcancersupportgroup.co.uk](http://www.peterboroughbreastcancersupportgroup.co.uk)