

**247th Meeting, on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2015, at Mount Vernon Hospital.**

**Attendance:** 23 members and guests

**1. WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS :**

- a. **Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed all present, particularly our guests including our guest-speaker Dr. Mohamed Shariff, Consultant Gastroenterologist, West Herts. Hospitals NHS Trust.
- b. **Announcements :**
  - Anyone not wishing to appear on video was asked to move out of camera range.
- c. **Apologies:** Tony Ellis (*Live at Home N'wood*), Pamela Grimwade and Mary Perkins (*Mountwood Patients*), Andrew Riley (*Northwood Hills RA*), Connie Evans and Chris Hickman (*Oak Farm RA*), James Kincaid (*The Pinner Assoc.*), Janet Gibson (*Southbourne WI*), Linda Clarke (*South Ruislip RA*), Janet Baddeley, Barbara Kalopsidiotis, Jean McFarlane, Barbara Porket, Margaret Ross, Jenny Stephany (*Individual Members*)

**2. GUEST SPEAKER :** Dr Mohamed Shariff, speaking about the causes and treatment of liver disease:

- a. The liver detoxifies blood, makes the blood clotting factor and bile, amongst multiple other functions.
- b. Liver damage can accumulate over many years, in the early stages silently and without pain, but in the final stages decline is rapid and there is often no effective treatment other than liver transplant.
- c. There are three main types of liver disease, cirrhosis due to alcohol consumption, fatty liver disease linked to diabetes and obesity, and forms of hepatitis A, B, and C caused by viral infection.
- d. Little can be done against liver disease, so mortality is rising rapidly, in contrast to many causes of death for which treatment is now effective. This crisis is largely neglected in the western world.
- e. Liver disease often has late diagnosis, with late discovery of cancer and cirrhosis, when little can be done. The average age of death from liver disease in UK is 55 years, but increasingly younger people are diagnosed with liver disease, often due to the current availability of cheap alcohol.
- f. Alcohol abuse has been a problem for centuries. Around 10% of heavy drinkers develop cirrhosis, the incurable scarring and hardening of the liver, but heavy drinkers do not always develop liver disease. Clinicians urge the government to increase the tax on alcohol to reduce alcohol consumption but there are counter arguments politically as alcohol is a good source of revenue.
- g. Fatty liver disease also causes scarring of the liver. The current rise in obesity could cause this to replace alcohol as the major cause of liver damage in perhaps twenty years time as 60% of men and 50% of women are currently obese.
- h. Hepatitis C was first identified in the 1980s. This is a blood borne virus, transmitted by infusions and by shared needles. It can hibernate for 20 or more years and it can affect other organs as well as the liver, but it is disguised in blood tests. It took six years of research to identify the virus and to find the first treatments, interferon and ribavirin, which cured 84% of patients but were very toxic. Later research has identified a completely effective treatment, tablets taken for three months, the first and to date only successful treatment for any viral infection – but the cost of this course of treatment is £50,000, much the same as for a liver transplant, and the cost is a bar to general use of the treatment in UK although it is widely used in the USA and Canada.

Questions from the audience led to a number of further points including:

- h. Treatment for hepatitis C: It is hoped that the combination of competition and demand will lower the cost. NHS England, not the local Clinical Commissioning Group, decides which NHS patients can receive this treatment, as NHS England pays for this treatment.
- i. Treatment for the early stages of cirrhosis: Textbooks usually state that there is no effective treatment, but some new treatments for hepatitis B and C appear to reverse damage. Usually only healthy liver can rejuvenate.

- j. Growing liver cells in the laboratory: This research has been ongoing for some years but has not proved successful.
- k. Early diagnosis of liver damage: There is now a machine indicating early hardening of the liver, which Watford Hospital hopes to obtain, but it costs £80,000 to buy and then has running costs.

The Chairman thanked the speaker for a most interesting presentation, noting that Community Voice has not previously heard a speaker on this topic which made his address particularly welcome. The audience endorsed her thanks by warm applause as Dr Shariff left the hall.

## Part II

**3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:** The Minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> October were agreed and signed as correct.

**4. MATTERS ARISING:** There were no matters arising.

### 5. URGENT BUSINESS:

**a. Northwood and Pinner Hospital Site:** There was a long discussion on this issue. Members were asked to return petition forms at our December meeting if possible, but signatures will be accepted later if necessary, particularly if there are opportunities to collect signatures at later events in December.

**b. Items on display:** The Chairman noted items displayed in the outer hall including publicity posters for our future meetings and reports from our representatives at NHS Board meetings held in public.

**c. Hillingdon Carers' Assembly:** The meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> November was noted

### 6. OPEN FORUM:

**a. Meeting on Thursday 7th January 2016:** This will be a discussion meeting, with no guest-speaker. The Chairman will accept suggestions for the agenda.

**b. Celebrating our 25th anniversary at our December meeting:** We hope this event will be well attended – an opportunity for members and friends who seldom attend to meet old friends and new.

**c. Joint appointments at Harefield Hospital and Hillingdon Hospital:** Joint appointments in cardiology and lung disease were reported and welcomed.

**7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:** The Chairman noted that we have no mailing in December, but members will receive our usual mailing in the middle of January 2016.

**NEXT MEETINGS:** The next meeting will be at 7.45 pm on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December at the Post Graduate Centre, Mount Vernon Hospital, doors open 7.30pm, when our guest speaker will be David McVittie and our guest of honour Stephen Ramsden. Business will be kept to a minimum so that we can adjourn for refreshments to celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and to welcome in the festive season.

The following meeting will be an informal discussion at 7.45pm at the same venue on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

On 4<sup>th</sup> February 2016 our guest speakers will be Nick Carver, Chief Executive East & North Herts. Hospitals NHS Trust and Sean DeGaris, Chief Executive The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS FT, who will jointly update us on plans for the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre and the Mount Vernon Hospital site

The meeting was closed at 9.35pm.

Joan Davis, Chairman

#### Notes:

Proposals for corrections to draft Minutes should be submitted to the Chairman in writing – please 'phone 01895 636095 for address details.

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Chairman

Hon. Secretary

Hon. Treasurer

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