

Norfolk & Waveney Prostate Cancer Support Group

NEWSLETTER

Issue No 44

August 2013

The high-tech research weapon: broccoli soup



Vice-chairman Ray Cossey welcomes Professor Richard Mithen and two of his research team, Dr Antonietta Melchini and Dr Omar Al Kadhi

It seems an unlikely research tool but 78 Norfolk men will soon be invited to include a range of broccoli soups in their diet. They will be recruited via the NNUH urology department and will be patients with low or intermediate risk prostate cancer who have opted for the active surveillance regime rather than treatment.

Professor Richard Mithen, leader of the research project at the Institute of Food Research (See Newsletter No. 43), and one of his team, Dr Omar Al Kadhi, told us at our May meeting that, after 15 years of work developing a better broccoli, the objective

now was to study how well it worked.

Could broccoli in the diet make changes in our bodies and within prostate tissue to protect men from the emergence of new cancer cells? But rather than expect men to eat lots of broccoli the vehicle will be three different soups, such as broccoli and Stilton, with the broccoli content varying in strength.

The institute's role is research into the relationship between food and health to enable society to achieve healthy and sustainable diets. The institute is a world leader in the study of pathogens

such as salmonella and thanks to its work the shelf life of everyday food products has been extended.

Professor Mithen told us that one of the reasons the Government provides 65% of the institute's funding through the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council was to support research into how we used diet and life style to ensure healthy ageing.

Broccoli, tomatoes, oily fish and exercise in moderation were known to have a beneficial effect. The institute was looking into how these things interacted. The current project had received substantial funding from the Prostate Cancer Foundation (www.pcf.org), an American charity that was the most important body in the world in terms of prostate cancer research.

Dr Al Kadhi said that volunteers who agreed to take part in the study would be tested by providing biopsy samples to check the effect of the soup diet and would also be asked to keep a food diary.

Several members said they had tried to buy the Beneforté "super broccoli" but had been unable to do so. Professor Mithen said it was in short supply because of last summer's bad weather but it should be available in some M&S and Asda stores and they were trying to persuade other stores to stock it. It should be more readily available this year.

Travel Insurance

For any group members having problems getting insurance for their travels, we pass on this information from the Daily Telegraph travel writer Sophie Butler. The following insurance firms specialise in pre-existing medical conditions for older travellers: All Clear Insurance (0845 250 5250; allcleartravel.co.uk); JD Travel Insurance (01689 859102; jctravelinsurance.co.uk); PJ Hayman (0845 230 5000; freespirittravelinsurance.com); and InsureCancer (0125 278 0190; insurecancer.com). "Check the small print before you buy," she advises.

One swallow does not a summer make

Tim Farnham, our publicity and fund-raising officer, relates his personal experience of a drastic change of diet

Let me tell you a story. I apologise that it's all about me but there is a reason for that, which I'll come to.

I had a radical prostatectomy in February 2011 and the follow-up tests showed my PSA level to be "undetectable". Perfect. That was until October of last year, when the test showed 0.2. A tiny level, but significant if you don't have a prostate gland. It suggested that there were still active cancer cells, hopefully in the prostate bed rather than elsewhere in my body. In January the level was 0.3 and the radiology specialist recommended testing again in May. He said he anticipated that my PSA level would continue to rise, and that for post-prostatectomy patients like myself a threshold of 0.4 PSA was a good time to consider radiotherapy to try to mop up whatever activity there was.

Around the turn of the year, having spoken to colleagues in the support group and done much reading, I decided to make radical changes to my diet. The list of so-called "super foods" is well known and I thought I would try to give myself the best possible chance of keeping the cancer at bay. I gave up dairy products, reduced my meat intake to minimal levels, starting eating lots of garlic, spices and herbs, and barrow-loads of fresh fruit and vegetables. I continued to eat fish and eggs. I considered my alcohol intake but felt that the presence of resveratrol in red wine was a plausible excuse for carrying on drinking for the time being.

Imagine my delight when, at my next appointment in May, I was told that my PSA level had dropped to 0.2 again. A small drop which is doubtless less than the margin of error in the test itself, but certainly not the significant rise I had been warned to expect.

The consultant was surprised by this result. He had used the word "exponential" in describing the increase that he had been expecting. On this basis my next appointment was fixed for September and he suggested that I enjoy the summer without any thoughts of imminent radiotherapy.

I also have chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL) in my portfolio of ailments. This is not uncommon over the age of fifty and it currently causes me no problems. I have a six-monthly blood test which shows, amongst other things, my white blood cell count. This has been rising gently since I was diagnosed in late 2008 and ultimately is likely to reach a point where I need treatment. My most recent blood test coincided with the PSA test and when I had the phone call for my teleclinic appointment, down the line came the news that my white blood cell count had also fallen. This was a more significant drop than the PSA and I am now back to the white blood cell count I had in the middle of 2010.

Of course, all this medical history proves precisely nothing. My next tests may very well show that my levels have gone back up again. Nevertheless, I am increasingly convinced that what we eat can have a significant influence on our progress with cancer and our body's ability to deal with it. I'm not talking about miracle cures or wacky diets. I like ideas based on hard evidence and experts who quote their sources. My aim is simply to put off any radical medical intervention for as long as possible, and if turning myself into a sort of lapsed vegan helps then so be it.

So as Aristotle said: "One swallow does not a summer make." But two is a bit more hopeful, don't you think?

Footnote: Members will recall that, despite his "portfolio of ailments", Tim walked 240 miles round Norfolk and raised £10,000 for the group and Big C.

Up, Up and Away at the Old Buckenham Air Show!

We had a stand at this event on the weekend of 22-23 June.

The weather was terrible on Saturday – with far fewer visitors than expected – and what seemed like gale force winds forced us to abandon our damaged stand.

There was a much larger crowd on Sunday; our stand was reconstructed by our aeronautical engineer president, David Haines; and we must have spoken to literally hundreds of men, quite a number of whom had prostate cancer issues – including one from Suffolk whose GP told him he would have to go private for a PSA test!

We handed out nearly all of the Prostate Cancer Charity men's leaflets – not to mention our own women's leaflets, which went down very well.

Quite a number of men were far from home and questions included: "Is there a PCa support group in Buckinghamshire?"

Many thanks to Dave Kirkham, who organised our participation in the show.

Dave Kirkham and Ray Cossey about to join the flying display!



From where I sit – Chairman Noel Warner's view

Actually not much sitting around at the moment due to various events taking place. One such was the Race for Life, held at the Norwich Showground. This event was specifically for women who either had cancer or wished to race for someone they knew with cancer. The dress code was strictly pink and as you can imagine the ground was turned into a sea of pink for the two days. Seven thousand women attended this event. They took part in three races, either running, jogging or walking depending on their ability. We watched the very last group cross the finishing line – they assisted a brave woman who had been wheeled around the 5K course but with the aid of sticks crossed the line on her own!

We were allocated a stand and received a great deal of interest. We prepared a leaflet aimed at women called: "Ladies...for the man in your life ignorance isn't bliss". Hundreds were given out and accepted gracefully by the women. Thanks to Roger Bassham and Tim Farnham for organising and helping out.



Noel and Tim accepting the cheque from Nick and Aileen.

Our next port of call was the Imperial Hotel, Great Yarmouth. The owners, Nick and Aileen Mobbs, recently celebrated three generations of Mobbs running the hotel which has been trading continuously for 80 years.

At a charity dinner they raised a magnificent £6400, half of which was donated to us, and the other half to RNLI.

Nick's father-in-law has survived prostate cancer, but he also lost a valuable member of staff to the disease recently.

We have donated £2500 from the Mobbs family donation, and will be buying a further stock of Professor Robert Thomas's "Lifestyle & Cancer" book. If you are a new member and have not got a copy of this book, please contact me and I will send you one.

We have also received the following very generous donations for which we are most grateful:

£1345 from Mrs Kathy Bell, of Scratby, Great Yarmouth, in memory of her husband Alan; £1200 raised by the members of Acle Indoor Bowling Club; £200 from Mr PV Ramm, of Goose Common, Little Ellingham; £100 from Mr Ray Wharton of Thurton; and £50 from Mr ESG Carter, of Downham Market.



Roger is pictured talking to Doreen and Linda, two carers from Corton House care home.

Pre-emptive strike

A British businessman who believed he was at risk of prostate cancer has become the first in the world to have his prostate removed in a pre-emptive operation. The 53-year-old found that he was carrying the faulty BRCA2 gene linked to aggressive forms of both prostate and breast cancer. The news emerged after the actress Angelina Jolie had a double mastectomy because she had the BRCA1 gene which gave her an 87 per cent risk of breast cancer - and a family history of premature deaths from cancer.

The businessman, who has a similar family history, insisted on the operation, despite the risk of incontinence and impotence, even though PSA and MRI tests showed no abnormalities. However, tissue samples showed microscopic malignant changes and examination of the gland after surgery showed a considerable level of undetected cancer.

"The relatively low level of cancerous cells we found in this man's prostate before the operation would these days not normally prompt immediate surgery but given what we now know about the nature of BRCA2 it was definitely the right thing to do for this patient," said Professor Roger Kirby, one of the world's leading prostate cancer surgeons. "I am sure more male BRCA carriers will now follow suit."



**The Church Hall
St. Andrew's Church
Cromer Road, Sheringham**

(FREE PARKING - Interval refreshments available)

Saturday 7th September

(Curtain-up 7.30pm)

DÉJÀ REVUE

An Entertaining Evening with

**TERRY CHAPPELLE
and Friends**

Light-hearted family show of music & laughter

In support of

NORFOLK & WAVENEY PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

All Tickets - £6.00

from - N&WPCSG, 73 Blofield Corner Road, Lt. Plumstead, Norwich, NR13 5HU
Please enclose a stamped & addressed envelope and make cheques payable to "N&WPCSG"
Also on sale at the door on the night - subject to availability.

Terry Chappelle is a Pca survivor and long-standing supporter. The entertainers are not charging, with all proceeds benefiting our group.

Finger of suspicion

Did Tony Soprano, the memorable character created by the late James Gandolfini, ever have a prostate examination? "I don't even allow anyone to wag a finger in my face," he told his therapist.

Dates for your Diary

Mon 5 Aug. 7-9pm
Open Meeting at James Paget Hospital (Burrage Centre), Gorleston-on-Sea NR31 6LA

Wendy Marchant, Big C Information Lead Nurse, and Janet John, CAB Advisor

'Welfare and benefit rights, travel insurance and hospital journey assistance'

Wed 7 Aug & 4 Sep. 5.30-7pm
Radiotherapy Department Open Evenings, Big C & Colney Centre, NNUH. Meet at Big C. Call 01603 288779 to book.

He should be so lucky!

If you have spent time in the radiotherapy waiting room in the Colney Centre at the NNUH, you may have been entertained by the often hilarious subtitles scrolling across the television screen.

Gems such as the report that a politician had been assassinated by two men on "water breaks" – motor bikes!

The subtitles are generated by voice recognition technology which leaves a lot to be desired, so the experts are trying to devise a better system.

A shame if it deprived us of the report that Alan Greenspan, former head of the US Federal Bank, had been admitted to hospital with "an enlarged prostitute"!!

How to Contact Us

■ Telephone the Specialist Nurses:

Sallie, Wendy, Helen & Rachel
Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital
01603 289845

Angie, Wendy & Simon
James Paget Hospital
01493 453510

Sally, Clare & Anne-Marie
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn
01553 613075

Lizzie – Macmillan Info & Support Radiographer
01603 289705

■ Help or Advice – Our Welfare Team:

We have over 30 members available to help. There is probably one near you.

For more information please call our Welfare Team, David and Adrienne Capp, on 01603 712601

■ **E-mail us:** Noel Warner, Chairman
noel.windfall5@btinternet.com

■ **Letters to the Editor:** David Paull
DavidLPaull@aol.com

■ **Visit our website:**
www.prostatesupport.org.uk