

ST ALBANS AND HARPENDEN PATIENT GROUP.

NEWSLETTER JULY 2018.



SAPG WISHES THE NHS A HAPPY 70th BIRTHDAY



To mark this special occasion, Thursday 5th July, our extended Newsletter contains four members' memories of the NHS. They are in the midst of our regular national and local NHS news. Read on.

Our last public meeting was on 24th May when Dr Richard Cutler and David Evans spoke on "A Reformed NHS for Herts" and explained that the NHS hopes that the recently formed Sustainability and Transformation Partnership will coordinate the provision of health and social care in the county.

Our next public meeting is planned for 26th September when Dianna Brent of the Herts Community Trust will address us on the latest proposals for the Harpenden Memorial Hospital and the St. Albans Health and Well-being Centre. Further details nearer the time.

First NHS Memory. An early diagnosis.

"When I was a **child** of about six years old I was referred to the Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic in Hemel Hempstead Hospital. We were being taught to read and write at school and, as the younger sister to an energetic and talkative brother, my conversational skills were immature. After falling behind in class, my teacher recommended that my parents speak with my doctor about my hearing. Sometimes it was as if I was completely absent from class activities. After some basic tests, I was referred to a smiley audiologist with bright earrings. I sat on a large cushion in a sound-proofed room on the hospital, and they placed black plastic headphones with a curly cord over my ears. I wrapped my fingers around a black plastic "buzzer" and was told to listen out for sounds. My mum and the audiologist shut the door behind them with a soft slump. I began the test. Beep. Beep. Beep. I had a busy mind, and after some while I had forgotten whether I was pressing for real sounds or imaginary sounds. The test finished and I peered up at the lady, nervously waiting for my results. She looked down, and said, "There's nothing wrong with your ears poppet, but I do think you need glasses." Over 20 years later, my hearing is still fine. But I am as blind as a bat without glasses. Well-done NHS. You got it right!" {Hannah}

Some national NHS News.

1) Earlier this year the NHS announced that 102 out of 130 NHS hospital trusts were in deficit partly because demand for treatment was rising by 3.5% a year but funding was rising by only 1.5%, although it did pledge to set up a £10m fund to retain GP's.

2) On 22nd May the NHS suggested that there were too many separate uncoordinated Hospital Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups and that it would encourage them to cooperate in STP's, with the possibility that it might reorganise them into larger and more efficient groups in the future.

3) In mid-June the Prime Minister announced that she would allocate £20bn to the NHS over the next few years, but it was quickly claimed that £20bn might allow the HNS to keep up with rising demand yet that it would not allow it to make fundamental and necessary improvements.

4) Indeed, the British Medical Association (sometimes nicknamed the GP's trade union) recently claimed that the NHS suffers from an all-year-round winter crisis and several independent studies stated that it is less well financed and equipped than health services in similar developed countries.

5) The shocking news that during the last twenty or thirty years patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in Hampshire had had their lives shortened by the over-use of pain killers, and that no effective action had been taken to stop it, or bring anyone to account, was deeply disturbing.

6) **There is danger here. We might criticise the NHS so much that some government or other says "We'll abolish it." I don't think we want that. We want to improve it; to make it even better.**

Second NHS Memory. Giving birth got better.

"In 1971 I was **expecting** my daughter just as new initiative was being introduced in which your GP would take care of you from pregnancy to birth. I started contractions at 5.00 a.m. and soon arrived at Stoke Mandeville's GP-led unit where I was examined and found to be in breach, but we had to wait for my GP to arrive before I could be transferred by blue-light emergency ambulance to Aylesbury General Hospital. I was given gas and air until I gave birth at 3.00 p.m. when my new-born was handed to my husband to hold whilst I was being stitched up. As I recovered and time went by, and I still hadn't seen my daughter, I began to fear that my emergency admission had led me to being fotgotton about but at last, a long five hours later, she was brought for me to cuddle and hold. Not the most pleasant or emotionally satisfying time, but the NHS brought me through it.

Some decades later things were different. When my daughter gave birth to my twin grandchildren (two bundles of joy, a boy and a girl) the hospital staff were wonderful. It was also wonderful that the Sister who attended the twins' birth stayed in touch with my daughter and all the other twins' mothers, which gave them a sense of security at such a difficult and stressful time in their lives. It was a tribute to the NHS that, despite all the controversies and difficulties, it had learned how to do things better and had improved. Let's hope it goes on improving." {Helen}

Some local NHS news.

- 1) Herts County Council is promoting healthy living by organising health walks, graded according to your existing fitness. Further information is available on healthwalks.cms@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- 2) West Herts Hospital Trust and the Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group are developing “My Care Record” which should soon allow A&E quicker and more comprehensive access to GP’s records. For further information go to www.mycarerecord.org.uk
- 3) HVCCG has introduced a Community Health and Wellbeing Ambassador Scheme to inform the public about health matters and to learn what the public thinks about local health services. If you are interested in becoming an Ambassador please contact heather.aylward@nhs.net
- 4) On 11th. July HVCCG is to hold a “Development Day”, telling patients and public about its latest activities and policies. For further information, please contact Heather, as above
- 5) Plans for the Urgent Treatment Centre at St. Albans City Hospital are still being considered but St. Albans GP surgeries should now be introducing “extended access” - evening and weekend opening.

Third NHS Memory. Thanks to A&E.

“Not so many years ago I needed **emergency care**. At 11.30 p.m. on Christmas Eve I wished my next door neighbours “Happy Christmas”, heard their front door close behind me, and saw their high iron security gate start to close. I ran towards it, forgetting the snow and ice; my feet flew from under me, I clutched my present in my left hand and put out my right hand to cushion my fall; and just got through the gate. Back in my own house, my right hand and wrist began to throb. What to do? Casualty in the early hours of Christmas Day? No thanks. I’d last out the night. At 9.00 a.m. some friends were to arrive to take me for lunch with other friends near Huntingdon. The A&E at the hospital there was a revelation. Carols playing in the background, a Receptionist dressed as Father Christmas, Nurses with tinsel in their hair, an affable and cheery Doctor, X-Rays readily available, diagnosis rapid, and that vulnerable little scarpoid thing (a very unusual bone, so the Doc said) quickly strapped up. In no time at all I was enjoying a pre-lunch drink (or two), having my turkey cut up for me and eating a lovely meal. Thanks and well-done NHS. You saved my Christmas Day. May you have many happy birthdays and lots more £20bn presents.” {John}

Local news. A tragedy and a tribute.

Our long-standing Executive Committee member, **John Blandford**, died suddenly and unexpectedly on Monday 11th. June. He was well-known for supporting the NHS, Watford General Hospital, St. Albans Hertbeats and Jersey Farm Day Centre. A first-class mathematician, a talented musician, and an IT expert, he was devoted to his family and a public-spirited resident of Sandridge village just north of St. Albans. Doreen and Roy Bratby, Gavin Ross and I attended his funeral on behalf of SAPG. St. Leonard’s Church, where he was a member of the congregation, was packed. A true force for good, John will be sadly missed by the very many people whose lives he touched for the better.

Fourth NHS Memory. The NHS at 70 years of age – Care and Compassion.

“For 70 years the NHS’s vision of “UK health **care** for all regardless of the ability to pay, from birth to death” has been maintained, despite rapidly growing demand and economic pressures. This has been achieved due to a dedicated and hardworking staff and successive governments’ determination. The NHS is a flag-ship service, loved and valued in our nation’s heart, admired by many other countries. We have many reasons to be thankful for this service and to keep it in place.

Recently I was present at a dear friend’s last days and hours battle with Cancer. I witnessed the valiant work of the clinical staff trying to deal with the disease and then caring for her to the end in an acute hospital ward. **Care** at the end of life is the last thing the dedicated staff can do for a patient to make the approach of death as dignified, comfortable and stress free as possible. The staff did that admirably. They continued to make her comfortable, talked to her even though she was unable to respond, and ensured the family were involved in how they planned her changing care to the very end. They even ensured that the family was fed and given hot drinks during the last vigil. Afterwards they provided space for the family to grieve, have time with her and say last goodbyes, before undertaking the formal certification and last offices. They showed regard for the family and shared with them the sadness of losing a life. The empathy, understanding and **compassion** shown by all the different staff groups was brilliant and not lost or diminished, despite their workload being so hectic. They maintained their technical and clinical skills alongside their caring and compassionate natures.

The NHS still retains **care** as its reason for existing and we celebrate this continued stance and look forward to decades more of this wonderful and reliable system.” {Alex}

AN INVITATION.

As usual, we are to hold a Summer Coffee Morning to which all members and partners are invited.

10.30 – 12.30. Saturday 21st July 2018.

13 Marshal’s Drive, St. Albans AL1 4RB

Number 13 is towards the north-west end of the road.

There is plenty of on-street parking.

RSVP to me by Thursday 19th. July.

PLEASE forward this Newsletter to any person or organisation you think may be interested, e.g. a GP Practice Patient Participation Group and do visit our w-site.

Best wishes,

John Wigley. (Chair SAPG). 1st July 2018.