



WRSG Newsletter

WOLVERHAMPTON RHEUMATOLOGY SUPPORT GROUP

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CARING IS SHARING

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Reminder

Visit to the Houses of Parliament

The 40 places for the tour of the Houses of Parliament on Friday 28th March are now taken. The cost of the coach fare is £13 with members providing their own food and drink as usual. We will leave Falkland Street coach park at 9.30 a.m. and leave London at approximately 5.00 p.m.

There are still spare places on the coach if anyone just wishes to visit London.

To book a place ring Joyce between 4.00 and 6.00p.m please

PLEASE NOTE – NO CAMERAS OR MOBILE PHONES CAN BE TAKEN INTO THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Information Session

We are having an information session on Monday 7th April at the Holly Bush, Penn Road Wolverhampton from 2.00 to 4.00 p.m

The talk will be by members of the Falls Prevention Team. They will talk about the risks of falling, how to reduce the risks and how to cope after a fall. They will also bring along aids to help with everyday living and falls prevention.

The talk will be from 2.00 to 3.00 p.m followed by afternoon tea, coffee and cakes. There will be no charge for this event. The team also provide a Balance for Life, programme which I am sure they will tell us about.

Booking forms will be included with the March newsletter.

We feel that the best way of providing meetings for members is with these information sessions. Joyce has suggested that we arrange a talk about the benefits system and I have been asked to include the Direct Payment Scheme. I will try to arrange this for May or June. If you have any requests for information sessions let me know please

Christmas Coffee Morning – JAM

I have received a request to trace the lady who brought the apple and blackberry jam to sell at the Christmas coffee morning. The member who bought it says it is the best jam her son has ever tasted and they would like to buy some more.

Will you get in touch with me please?

Dorothy

Making Changes

In January 2007 I decided that I needed to make some changes in my life and I got in touch with Tricia to do my housework. I also asked Bill to do my garden for me. These two changes made my life a lot easier. I had coped with rheumatoid arthritis for a very long time and managed throughout all the surgery which included hip and knee replacements. I had my pantry turned into a downstairs toilet which was a real benefit while I was on sticks or crutches and it still is. Another worthwhile change!

When you have something like rheumatoid arthritis it is very easy to blame everything that goes wrong on that illness. In the spring of 2006 I had a bad attack of shingles. I lost a lot of weight and was quite ill. I think I took a long time to recover from that.

In February 2007 I had a fall breaking my thumb and again life became rather difficult but I coped particularly with the aid of an electric can opener.

I have now decided the time has come to make more changes.

On the 30th November we went on the tribute weekend to Sinah Warren, Hayling Island and on the journey down I had quite a bad fall in the toilets on the M4 Services at Membury. When the Paramedics arrived I said "Please don't take me to hospital because they couldn't stitch my fragile skin". I had a nasty gash on my left arm. The Paramedics treated me for over an hour in the ambulance. They cleaned me up and put sterastrips on the wound then they let me carry on with my holiday. I wrote to thank them and received a nice reply.

Everyone on the coach was very understanding and they didn't seem to mind that I had delayed them. When I got back on the coach they clapped and I apologised. We had a lovely weekend.

I don't know why I fell. I didn't pass out and there were no step to fall over and no water on the floor. As this was the second time I had fallen in 2007 I was in touch with the Falls Prevention team.

I recovered quite well. My bruised eye, my arm and my sore ribs got better. However, about two weeks after the fall I was trying to pull on my very strong Lymphoedema support stockings when my shoulder went crack. It sounded just like a whip cracking and I could hardly move my left arm. This was a nightmare because I couldn't reach my hand up to the car indicator so I wasn't safe to drive. Kath drove me around and Ashley and Alison came down from Wales and took me to New Cross. I had an x-ray on the shoulder and I had damaged a tendon. I did lots of exercises to get it going again but I realised just how fragile I had become.

When Tricia came to do my housework she walked in saying "Hello Calamity Jane" but she took my bed linen to wash for me!

Now for the changes! Geraldine from the Falls Prevention team brought me higher seats for my toilets so that I don't have to use my arms to get up. She had some handles put by the front and back door to help me get in without pulling on my arms and I purchased a stair lift. My car is a Volvo and although it has power steering it is a big car to manage so another change may be necessary. I am driving quite safely again now though.

The reason I am writing all this is because I want to explain that to maintain a quality of life it is sometimes necessary to make changes. I think the thing I dislike most is the conspicuous handle by the front door because it is prominent whereas everything else is inside but if needs must so be it.

I also learned a valuable lesson while my arm was so useless. I have been doing the newsletters "All by myself". Well I typed the January one and ran them off myself but there was no way I could staple and fold them so I called in some committee members.

Julie, Irene and June came to the rescue and Julie said "At last Dorothy will let us help" Point taken I am not going to be a martyr. I have typed this February one and run them off but I have called in the team again and it is much more sensible

My hands are quite dysfunctional. Turning keys is proving quite difficult. I don't particularly have a problem at home. I do have the blue attachment for my front door key and I have mortice locks so they are not small keys. However when I was in Malta and in Sinah Warren I couldn't get into my room. In Malta I was just round the corner from the lift so I waited by the lift and asked someone to open my door for me. This was not very sensible because I didn't know who I was asking but I couldn't see any other option.

At Sinah Warren I was next door to Liz so most of the time she opened the door for me. On one occasion I asked a man to open the door for me and he asked if I would also like my back scrubbing! We joked about it but it can be quite scary! These keys were both Yale locks but the easiest hotel doors are when you just put in a card.

When Geraldine came from the Falls Prevention team she brought along aids which you can purchase. Of course one of the best buys for me is my bath buddy. Most of the things I had bought over the last twenty years. The long handled comb, the large handled cutlery, although I take a steak knife every time I eat out so that I can cut up my food. Telephones are improved now because you do not have to stand in the hall anymore. That applies to everyone whether you are disabled or not. Cordless phones are a boom.

I use nut crackers to open bottles and a small knife to open biscuits. I have a gadget for ring pulls. Well I suppose I have bought everything which is available. I have also spent money on things which do not help. I have bought things to open jars but nothing I can manage because my hands are so weak so I wait for visitors to do that.

Three years ago I went on a turkey and tinsel holiday to Weymouth and my case was lost on my return journey. I did get it back fairly quickly but it put me in a panic because the metal frame I use to get my stockings on and the mat I use to get them off were in the case.

This year when we went on the tribute weekend I decided not to put the important dressing aids etc in my case. I put them in a separate bag in case the case got lost. Well lo and behold the case didn't get lost but the bag did. I had put my dressing aids, my long handled shoe horn and all my medication in the bag. In fact everything which was important for me and I didn't get the bag back until the next evening. This meant I had to sleep in my stockings which were quite uncomfortable and it meant I couldn't have my morning bath which I rely on to get me going. I did label the bag quite clearly.

Why does life have to be such a struggle?

Strange things happen to me.

We were just about to board the plane for our return from Malta when a member of staff came asking for Dorothy Darby. She said my seat had been changed. When I got to my seat I had been put by the Emergency door. The Stewardess said my bag and my walking stick would have to go up in the locker. I gave them to her but she must have noticed my hands. A few minutes later she came back and asked if I would be able to open the door in an emergency. I said no and once again my seat was changed. Can you imagine me in charge of getting people safely off a plane? I don't think so!

I used to have a "Posh" kitchen but I changed it to a functional one with almost everything within my reach and I also bought an old style cooker with an eye level grill

I was having difficulty hanging my clothes on the rail in my wardrobes. Ashley lowered the rail in one of them and I have a stick with three prongs on to put under coat hangers to hang up my coats and blouses. Improvisation!

I have decided that perhaps I need to go into "sheltered housing". I need four bedrooms. I need one for Jessica, one for Jack, one for me and one for the computer equipment and the photocopier. I can then continue to do my charity work and be looked after at the same time.

I am joking FOR NOW!

I had plans for all my Christmas meals and parties during December and then a relaxing Christmas Day and Boxing Day. I did attend the meals and parties but as I was walking wounded they were not as much fun as I had hoped.

On Christmas Day I opened my presents and then decided that there was only so much TV I could cope with so I came up on the computer and made a movie called "70 Years of Memories of Family and Friends from 1937 to 2007."

It is a slideshow of photographs, titles and background music.

It is over an hour long and took me the whole of the holiday so I had to put it in four chapters. It is on a DVD and will really only appeal to the family but they can throw away my photograph albums now when I pop off.

The movie begins with my Nan and Grandad in 1937. Then there are two photographs of my Mom and Dad standing by the railings at the top of the cliff railway and Bridgnorth in 1940 and it finishes with me standing by the same railings in October 2007.

As I was making the movie I realized how my life has changed because of the WRSG. Up until 2002 my photographs are mainly outings I have been on with my family but from 2002 to 2007 they are mainly with my friends from the WRSG and we do have a good social life!

Jessica, Jack, Greg and Ann came back from a skiing holiday in Canada on the 27th December and my family Christmas began. The children slept over on Friday, 28th but they hadn't adjusted to the time back in England and they were still playing at 3.00 a.m. I gave up, shut my bedroom door and let them get on with it. They woke at lunch time on Saturday but it didn't matter. Jack said was I cross with them and when I said no he told me how much he loved me!

I packed Christmas away on New Year's Day because I was glad to see the back of 2007.

Dorothy

As I have been writing about falls it seems a good time to print a reminder about Osteoporosis. This is a reminder for our longstanding members and information for our new members.

I take a once a month tablet called Ibandronic Acid (Bonviva)

The only problem for me is that you have to fast for at least six hours before taking it and then sit upright for at least one hour after. You can then eat, drink and take your medication as normal. This means I cannot have a painkiller for 7 hours and I only usually manage for four hours but it is only once a month.

Osteoporosis by

Dr Gill Jenkins and Dr Rob Hicks

Osteoporosis is a condition where the bones - particularly those of the spine, wrist and hips - become thin and weak, and break easily. Often there are no warning signs before a break occurs.

In this article

What causes it?

Who's affected?

What are the symptoms?

How's it diagnosed?

How's it treated?

How can I prevent it?

Advice and support

What causes it?

The condition occurs because from around the age of 35 more bone cells are lost than replaced so bone density decreases.

Osteoporosis may cause people to 'shrink' as they get older. It causes the characteristic 'dowager's hump'.

Who's affected?

Osteoporosis mainly affects women after the age of the menopause, although men can have it. It may occur in younger people if they have other predisposing factors.

About three million people in the UK have the condition. Every year in the UK more than 230,000 fractures occur because of osteoporosis. One in two women and one in five men over the age of 50 will have a fracture.

After the menopause bone loss speeds up making osteoporosis more likely. In women the risk is increased if they have an early menopause, have their ovaries removed before the menopause, or miss periods for six months or more as a result of excessive exercising or dieting.

For men low levels of testosterone increase the risk.

For men and women, long-term use of corticosteroid medication, maternal osteoporosis, smoking, heavy drinking, sedentary lifestyle, low body weight and medical conditions that affect absorption, such as Coeliac disease, all increase the risk.

What are the symptoms?

There may be no warning before a minor bump or fall causes a bone fracture, which may result in pain, disability and loss of independence, or even prove fatal.

It's important to consider whether you're at higher than average risk for osteoporosis, and seek help if you are. Ask yourself the following questions:

If female, have you had the menopause?
Was it premature, before the age of 45?
Did you have an eating disorder severe enough to stop your periods?
Have you had low trauma or spontaneous fractures in the past?
Have you been told that previous x-rays suggest thinning of the bones?
Have you lost height in the past ten years?
Have you been on steroids for more than six months?

Is there a family history of osteoporosis, easy fractures or 'dowager's hump'?
Do you have chronic illness, such as thyroid disease, arthritis or bone disease, renal disease or hormonal problems?
Have you been immobile for any reason?
Do you smoke or drink a lot?

If you answer 'yes' to two or more of these questions, you may have osteoporosis or be at risk of it. See your GP who'll send you for specialist assessment.

How is it diagnosed?

As well as an examination and blood checks, there are a variety of tests that can give you a more definite density assessment.

The most common is called a DEXA scan. This painless test involves a low dose of x-rays (less than a normal x-ray) usually across your spine, wrist or hip.

The specialist will then tell you whether you have osteoporosis, or are at risk, and will suggest treatments.

Oestrogen, either naturally before the menopause or as HRT, is known to protect against bone loss. There are a number of treatment options if you're diagnosed with osteoporosis.

How's it treated?

Medication may include:

Calcium and vitamin D supplements
A variety of hormone treatments, including HRT and SERMS
Bisphosphonates, a group of drugs that prevent bone breakdown and can be very effective in osteoporosis

How can I prevent it?

It's better to prevent any condition than simply to manage it when it happens. Osteoporosis assessment and management is an important factor in maintaining the health of your bone structure as you enter middle age.

Increase the calcium in your diet, increase the amount of weight-bearing exercise you do - this helps maintain bone density – reduce your alcohol intake and quit smoking.

Advice and support
National Osteoporosis Society
Helpline: 0845 450 0230
Website: www.nos.org.uk

This article was last medically reviewed by Dr Rob Hicks in July 2006.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

Dr Rob Hicks

SAD is a specific type of depression that affects people at the same time each year - autumn and winter. During spring and summer, people with SAD feel well.

What causes it?

Experts believe SAD is related to a lack of daylight exposure, which explains why people feel well during spring and summer and only start experiencing problems when the days get shorter.

What are the symptoms?

Many people complain of feeling miserable, lacking in energy, being tired, having low spirits and feeling depressed. Some also find their sleep is disturbed, they eat less or more than usual and they have no sex drive. Symptoms usually start between September and November and almost always spontaneously disappear with the arrival of spring and the longer daylight hours.

Who's affected?

Up to one in 20 people is believed to be affected by SAD, with women three times more likely to be affected than men. Younger people, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 40, are more likely to suffer. Because days get shorter the further north you go, SAD is more common in northern countries.

Worrying about work, relationships or money make SAD more likely

What's the treatment?

Ensure exposure to plenty of daylight. Light boxes provide a regular dose of artificial light each day and help many people.

Counselling, exercising and spending time outdoors can help. Boost mood with rest, relaxation, regular exercise and a healthy diet.

Treatment with antidepressants or St John's wort may help to relieve symptoms.

This article was last medically reviewed by Dr Rob Hicks in July 2006.

Why do we have Leap Day?

Information provided by Royal Greenwich Observatory:

Our solar year (the time required for Earth to travel once around the Sun) is 365.24219 days.

Our calendar year is either 365 days in non leap years or 366 days in leap years (Feb 29th inserted).

A leap year every 4 years gives us 365.25 days, sending our seasons off course and eventually in the wrong months.

To change .25 days to .24219, we need to skip a few leap days (Feb 29ths) ... century marks not divisible by 400. So with a few calculations tweak the calendar by skipping 3 of 4 century leap years to average out our calendar year to 365.2425, which is pretty darn close to the solar year 365.24219.

Here's the history:

The Romans originally had a 355-day calendar. To keep up with the seasons, an extra 22 or 23-day month was inserted every second year. For reasons unknown, this extra month was only observed now and then. By Julius Caesar's time, the seasons no longer occurred at the same calendar periods as history had shown.

To correct this, Caesar eliminated the extra month and added one or two extra days to the end of various months (his month included, which was Quintilis, later renamed Julius we know it as July).

This extended the calendar to 365 days. Also intended was an extra calendar day every fourth year (following the 28th day of Februarius).

However, after Caesar's death in 44 B.C., the calendars were written with an extra day every 3 years instead of every 4 until corrected in 8 A.D. So again, the calendar drifted away from the seasons.

By 1582, Pope Gregory XIII recognized that Easter would eventually become closer and closer to Christmas.

The calendar was reformed so that a leap day would occur in any year that is divisible by 4 but not divisible by 100 except when the year is divisible by 400. Thus 1600 and 2000, although century marks, have a Leap Day.

The calendar we use today, known as the Gregorian calendar, makes our year 365.2425 days only off from our solar year by .00031, which amounts to only one day's error after 4,000 years.

30 days hath September
April, June and November
February has 28 alone and
all the rest have 31
Leap year comes once in four
and February has 1 day MORE!

An Odd Tradition:

According to ancient lore, back in the 5th century, Irish St. Bridget convinced St. Patrick that women should be allowed to propose marriage at least one day a year. St. Patrick relented, but with a catch—he ordained that women would have the opportunity only every four years—on leap day.

The tradition continued, and in 1288 Scotland passed a law that gave women the legal right to propose on leap day. And if the man refused, he was fined!

Twins! But one is NOT a Leap Day Baby!

Helene and Elaine born 1960
Helene and Elaine are twins. One is a Leap Day Baby, and the other is not.
Helene was born February 29, 1960 at 11:56 P.M. Elaine was born 6 minutes later on March 1, 1960 at 12:02 A.M.

Leap Day Babies rule. I mean how many people can say that they had a 1 out of 1461 chance of being born on that day. When you get to be 40, you have the privilege of telling everyone that you are actually only 10.

I asked Brenda if she could write a poem for us about leap year and she has sent the following: Thanks Bren.

ITS LEAP YEAR AGAIN

Well leap year is here again,
Do the ladies still look around,
To find a handsome fellow,
That's if any can be found.

Leap year used to give a girl the chance,
To maybe become a blushing bride,
And so many proposals then were made,
But now the custom seems to have died.

The trend was for the girl,
To propose marriage to a lad,
Sometimes it would end happily,
But sometimes very sad

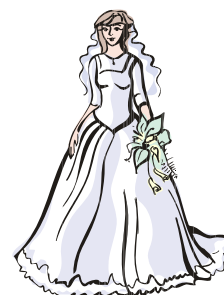
One year I met a boy,
And we were going steady,
I casually mentioned a leap year proposal,
He ran off crying "I'm not ready."

My friend Jane cosied up to her fellow,
Whilst sitting on their settee,
And asked if he had thought about,
Getting down on one knee

He went pale and looked quite ill,
And made quickly for the door,
You know I've got a bad back he said,
And I wouldn't get off the floor.

I called for a lad I once dated,
I thought I was in with a chance,
He slammed the door on my feet,
And I missed the leap year dance.

So most of all proposals,
Will end up with a definite no,
So take my advice girls forget them,
And wait for the right one to show.



It Makes You Wonder!

Why is it that people say they “slept like a baby” when babies wake up every two hours?

If a deaf person has to go to court, is it still called a hearing?

Why do we press harder on a remote control when we know the batteries are flat?

Why do banks charge a fee on “insufficient funds” when they know there is not enough?

Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars but check when you say the paint is wet?

Why do they use sterilised needles for death by lethal injection?

Are there specially reserved parking spaces for “normal” people at the Special Olympics?

If the temperature outside today is zero and it’s going to be twice as cold tomorrow, what will the temperature be?

If it’s true that we are here to help others, what are the others doing here?

Do married people live longer than single ones or does it only seem longer?

Can you cry under water?

How is it that we put man on the moon before we figured out it would be a good idea to put wheels on suitcases?

Why do people pay to go up tall buildings and then put money into binoculars to look at things on the ground?

Who was the first person to say, “See that chicken over there, I’m going to eat the next thing that comes out of its bum”?

Why is there a light in the fridge but not in the freezer?

Can blind people see their dreams?

If quizzes are quizzical, what are tests?

If corn oil is from corn and vegetable oil is from vegetables, what is baby oil made from?

Do illiterate people get the full effect of alphabet soup?

Did you ever notice that when you blow in a dog’s face he gets mad at you, but when you take him on a car ride he sticks his head out of the window?

Does pushing the lift button more than once make it arrive faster?

A Fairy Tale

Cinderella is now 95 years old. After a happy life with the now deceased Prince, she sits upon her rocking chair watching the world go by from her front porch with her cat, Bob, for companionship.

One afternoon, out of nowhere, appeared her fairy godmother. Cinderella said, “Fairy godmother, what are you doing here after all these years?” The fairy godmother replied, “Cinderella, you have lived an exemplary life. Is there anything for which your heart still yearns?”

Cinderella was taken aback and after some consideration she uttered her first wish.

“The Prince was wonderful but not much of an investor. I’m living hand to mouth on my old age pension and I wish I were wealthy.”

Instantly her rocking chair turned into solid gold! The fairy godmother said, “It’s the least I can do. Do you have a second wish?”

Cinderella looked down at her frail body and said, “I wish I were still young and as beautiful.”

Immediately her wish was fulfilled and she was again young and beautiful. She felt stirrings inside her that had been dormant for years.

And then the fairy godmother spoke again, “You have one more wish. What shall it be?”

Cinderella looked over to the cat cowering in the corner and said, “I wish that Bob, my cat, be transformed into a kind and handsome young man.”

Instantly Bob turned into a man more beautiful than she had ever seen before.

The fairy godmother said, “Enjoy your new life, Cinderella.” and disappeared with a blazing shock of blue light.

For a few moments, Bob and Cinderella gazed into each other’s eyes, each staring at the most beautiful person they had ever seen.

Bob walked over to Cinderella in her golden rocking chair and, holding her close, murmured, “I bet you wished you’d never had me neutered!”

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