



WRSG Newsletter

WOLVERHAMPTON RHEUMATOLOGY SUPPORT GROUP

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CARING IS SHARING

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Concert - Reminder

Joyce Knibbs is organising this fundraising concert and we need your support.

The sixty strong Ashmore Park Choir will entertain us at Fallings Park Methodist Church, Wimbourne Road, Fallings Park on Saturday 12th May at 7.30 p.m.

Light refreshments will be provided in the interval.

The proceeds will be for the WRSG. Admission will be by ticket at £4 per person and we will hold a raffle on the ticket numbers. The music will be very varied.

The tickets are available by contacting Joyce on 01902 862198

Information Session

At the Information Session Dr. Paul Newton gave a very interesting talk on the various forms of arthritis concentrating mainly on pain and the drugs and other methods used to control pain. The talk was very well attended and as usual many members had questions for Dr. Newton. We held a raffle which raised £70 towards the cost of the event which was £164. Once again the Holly Bush allowed us to use the room without charge for which we are very grateful.

Outings - Reminders

Carvery meal

Tuesday 15th May has been booked for the carvery meal at the Mill Farm Restaurant Cannock. There are still places available.

We will leave Falkland Street coach station at 11.00 a.m. and leave Cannock for the return journey at 2.00 p.m.

There will be a £3 per head charge for the coach with members paying for their own meal as usual. We will hold a raffle.

London Eye

Joyce has booked the trip to the London Eye for Tuesday 12th June. We will leave Wolverhampton at 9.00 a.m. and return from London at approximately 6.30 p.m.

The price for the coach and the trip on the London eye will be £15 per person

I read in the Express & Star that my MP Pat McFadden had been on a visit to India. That reminded me of the poem I printed in the April edition from Usha Ghia about her childhood in an Indian village so I contacted Pat and asked him to write about his trip for us

Pat has sent the following article.

“Last week I returned from a whirlwind week-long trip to India. I was visiting firstly as a Government Minister to look at IT projects, and then on the second part of my trip I visited the Punjab as Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South East.

With its c.25,000 residents from Indian backgrounds, Wolverhampton already has strong family ties with India; especially the Punjab. I have been working on a project in the last few months to see how we can strengthen and develop those ties and use them to benefit our city and the Punjab region in India from which so many in our community originate.

I had the particular honour on the Thursday of my trip to visit the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the most sacred site for the Sikh faith. I also held talks with Punjab State Government Ministers about how we could build on the already strong ties that exist between Wolverhampton and the Punjab; particularly in the areas of trade, education and culture.

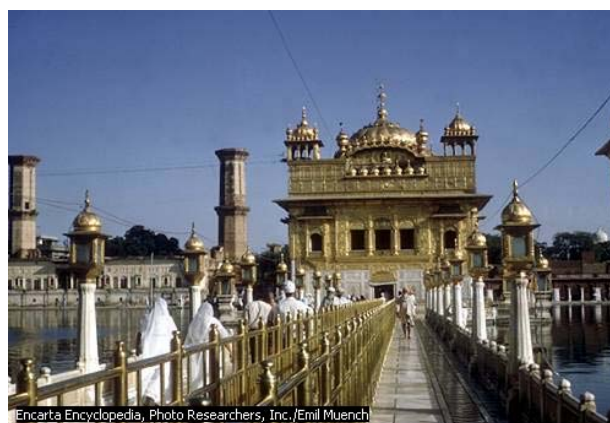
I have read and heard much about India’s growth as a world economic power in recent years, and with the possibilities offered by new technology for communication, it makes sense for us to deepen links which already exist.

The UK has 500 Indian owned firms employing thousands of people and attracts 60% of all Indian inward investment into Europe. These companies invest and create jobs here because of our stable economy, our low inflation and interest rates and the fact that the two countries share use of the English language.

So the real picture is quite different from the common perception that India’s growth and Globalisation means a transfer of jobs from here to there – the reality is much more of a two-way street with both countries benefiting.

My hope is that Wolverhampton can claim its share of the investment from India and the jobs it creates in the future. I also believe young people in both places can benefit by deepening links between schools in Wolverhampton and schools in India and fostering links between Higher Education Institutions. I have been working with the British Council in India so that we can do more on this in the future and met with a number of schools in the Punjab to lay the foundations of this joint working. Watch this space!”

Thank you Pat



Golden Temple

Located in Amritsar, a city in the Punjab state of northwestern India, the Golden Temple serves as the most important house of worship for the Sikhs. The Temple was originally built in 1604,

Direct Payments from Social Services

I have been asked to inform you of the Direct Payments Scheme from Social Services. It is a scheme whereby you get the money to buy your own services rather than Social Services providing the care you need. I have taken the leaflets to the Information Session but for any members who did not attend that meeting you can obtain a copy of the leaflet by calling 01902 555496

Infections

Dr Trisha Macnair

We all get infections. Most are just sniffles, but some can be more serious. We explain how they're spread, why some people are more vulnerable than others and how to prevent them.

In this article

Micro-organisms

Infections from food

Close contact Hospital-acquired infections

Vulnerability to infection

Prevention

It's human nature to seek explanations for the things that happen to us. So when we get an infection, we want to know where it came from and why we got it.

It's often impossible to be sure. Infections are caused by microscopic organisms - bacteria, viruses and fungi - so we can't see them to track how they spread.

Even if we could, it wouldn't be possible to recognise all the dangerous ones among the billions of harmless micro-organisms that surround us.

Scientific detective work over the years has revealed where certain harmful microbes lurk and how they're passed on. This helps doctors to make informed suggestions about how an infection's been picked up, but it's just guesswork.

Only careful laboratory tests can trace the source of an infection with any certainty.

Micro-organisms

Micro-organisms are unavoidable - they're in the air we breathe, every surface we touch and the food we eat

Most of the bacteria and viruses in our homes are harmless, or our body has learned to fight them. But disease-causing germs can be brought in by visitors.

Someone with a cold, for example, fills the air with the virus when they sneeze, and leaves virus particles on anything they touch.

We can then become infected when we breathe in or touch a contaminated object. When we travel or leave a familiar environment, we come across bacteria and viruses that our immune system hasn't encountered before.

So although these germs don't make the locals ill, they can make visitors unwell.

Infections from food

Food and water are also sources of infection. Raw food is covered in micro-organisms. Most are harmless or do the body good by growing in our intestines and protecting them from more harmful germs, but others cause disease, especially if food's been contaminated by sewage or animal waste, or isn't cooked properly.

In the 1980s, an outbreak of infection with a harmful strain of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) a bacteria commonly found in the gut, was traced to contaminated hamburgers. Since then, most infections with this organism (*E. coli* O157:H7) are believed to have come from eating undercooked ground beef.

Close contact

We also pick up harmful organisms through skin-to-skin contact with other humans or animals.

From the moment we're born, we pick up bacteria and viruses from our mother's skin and body fluids. These may include dangerous strains such as hepatitis B, HIV or herpes, as well as common skin organisms such as staphylococcus.

Later in life, infections such as gonorrhoea and HIV can be passed on through transmission of body fluids during sexual contact.

Contact with animals exposes us to new micro-organisms. A bite from an infected dog could lead to rabies, for example, while cleaning out a lizard's cage could lead to salmonella.

Hospital-acquired infections

Some health care settings, especially hospitals, are more likely to harbour dangerous micro-organisms. Patients are particularly vulnerable to infection because their immune systems tend to have been weakened by disease.

Worse still, the organisms that tend to survive in hospitals are those which have developed resistance to antibiotics. One example that's caused a lot of concern in recent years is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA.

This type of bacteria is easily spread. Healthy people can live with it on their skin or in their noses without becoming ill.

This is known as 'colonisation' or being a carrier.

Health care staff and visitors carry the bacteria around - 30 per cent of people are carriers of Staphylococcus aureus and in hospitals this is more likely to be the MRSA variety - and unwittingly spread MRSA to patients in whom it can cause potentially life-threatening wound infections.

Vulnerability to infection

Being exposed to micro-organisms is half the story, but it doesn't explain why some people in a certain place develop an infection, while others in the same place at the same time don't.

What also matters is how susceptible an individual is and how well their immune system can defend them. Many factors are involved in this:

Genes

Minor or major genetic abnormalities can reduce immunity, leaving people especially vulnerable to infection

Previous exposure - if your body's been exposed to the germ before (or one like it), your immune system may be able to get into action more rapidly

Age - young children and older people are more vulnerable to infection and less able to fight it off

Illness - chronic illness can reduce the efficiency of the immune system

Medicines - many medicines suppress the immune system, such as the steroids used for asthma

Surgery - the skin forms a major barrier to infection but cuts and wounds from trauma or surgery enable micro-organisms to enter the body

Malnourishment - nutritional deficiencies can affect how well the immune system works

Prevention

In future, with better scientific understanding and more sophisticated laboratory tests, we may know the answers to where harmful infections come from. Until then, it's a case of taking all the necessary precautions to reduce your risk of infection.

Wash your hands regularly (this is also vital to reduce the chance of passing on an infection to others)

Keep your immune system strong by following a healthy diet, taking regular exercise and getting plenty of rest

Store food carefully and cook it properly

Practise safe sex

Keep away from identifiable high-risk situations, so avoid friends with flu and be extra vigilant while in hospitals

This article was last medically reviewed by Dr Trisha Macnair in January 2007.

DIPSTICK FINDS FOOD POISON BUGS

Scientists are developing a dipstick test to help people quickly spot if food is spoiled and could poison them.

In less than five minutes the dipsticks can check for the presence of chemicals emitted by disease-causing bacteria, a University of South Carolina team said.

A colour change from dark purple to red indicates food is on the turn, while a yellow result means food has perished.

The UK's Health Protection Agency said food that appeared fine to eat could harbour bugs the test would not spot.

The agency's Suzanne Surman-Lee cautioned: "You can't equate spoilage to the risk of getting food poisoning."

The university team showcased a prototype at an American Chemical Society meeting.

Unsafe to eat

When food begins to spoil there may be tell-tale signs, such as a foul smell or the appearance of mould.

But it is not always clear when foods become unsafe to eat.

Tests for specific bacteria that cause food poisoning generally require expensive, complicated kit and take hours or even days to give a result.

Instead, the disposable dipsticks detect compounds generated as the proteins in food are decayed by bacteria.

Preliminary tests on foods such as fresh salmon and both fresh and tinned tuna showed the dipsticks accurately spotted the presence of these biogenic amines 90% of the time.

Although many fruits and vegetables contain lower protein levels than fish and meats, the scientists say their studies suggest the dipsticks work on these foods too.

They now plan more detailed studies and are hopeful that the product will be available for consumers to buy in a few years' time.

COMMON FOOD CULPRITS

Food poisoning bacteria and where they are found

Campylobacter - milk and poultry

Salmonella - eggs, meat (especially poultry)

Clostridia - spores in food (especially meat)

Listeria - meat, dairy foods, fish and shellfish

They are also working to improve the speed, accuracy and sensitivity of the test. Study leader Dr John Lavigne stressed that the dipsticks cannot indicate which specific food poisoning bacteria - such as salmonella or E.coli - are present.

Also, mould on some foods, such as blue cheese, is desirable.

Professor Hugh Pennington, emeritus professor of bacteriology at Aberdeen University, said the test might be more useful for food outlets than consumers. A spokesman from the Food Standards Agency said the presence of biogenic amines usually indicated that the food product had been poorly prepared and stored.

He stressed: "A test of this sort must not be used instead of efficient storage and preparation techniques."

About six million people in the UK - 10% of the population - have a case of food poisoning each year. More than half are caused by bacteria.

Most people have mild symptoms and recover quickly, but some may develop more serious illness and require hospital treatment.

Story from BBC NEWS:
Published: 2007/03/26

The Dorothy Darby Diet

Well you can pay a small fortune for a diet plan and still not succeed.

When my hand was in plaster for four weeks I changed my diet because I couldn't use a knife and fork, just an electric can opener a microwave oven and a spoon.

I had toast for breakfast. For lunch I had half a can of either beef and vegetable or chicken and vegetable big soup and two rounds of bread and butter and for tea I had half a can of macaroni pudding.

I never eat supper and I don't eat much in between meals anyway but I have reduced my weight from eight and a half stone to eight stone. Having your hand in plaster is not good and I suppose I would have got bored with this food sooner rather than later but I don't want to put the weight back on because I don't think excess weight is good for my artificial joints. Shall I patent the diet?

Appointment

On Wednesday 4th April I received an appointment to attend New Cross Fracture clinic on Monday 2nd April. I should have contacted Dr. Who to take me back in time but I rang New Cross.

They said sorry but the letter had only been posted on 30th March so they knew I would not get it in time. Another appointment was in the post for 30th April.

I was upset to receive a letter on the 10th April saying "As you did not attend your last appointment at the above clinic this new date has been booked for you" Further down the letter it said "IMPORTANT" The Trust's policy is not to automatically offer further appointments to patients who fail to let us know they will not be attending" I do not want to be a DNA (Did not attend) patient through no I fault of my own. New Cross is looking into the Health Records procedure at the moment.

The Cat

Well I cannot face a third summer of worrying about whether this cat will bite me again. He keeps sitting outside the patio door and would be in like a shot. I cannot open the kitchen door either and it really is a nuisance because he is not to be trusted! The weather was looking very promising so on Good Friday I invested in a Cat Guard from Argos at £29.79. It had to be fixed on the fence and plugged into the electricity. It emits a high frequency sound as a deterrent to cats.

On Easter Saturday I mowed my back lawn and cooked lunch. I then opened the patio door and plugged in the cat guard.

I settled down to watch the Davis cup tennis and the boat race. To my dismay the cat walked straight into my living room. Either the cat guard doesn't work or the cat is DEAF! I hope eventually it will work so that the blackbirds nesting in my conifer tree are safe as well as me.



Another Unwanted Caller

On the 4th April I received a telephone call from a lady saying they were conducting a survey in the Willenhall area and did I have neck pain, back pain or arthritis and did I have trouble relaxing or sleeping.

I said I had rheumatoid arthritis and I hadn't slept through the night for twenty years but what were they selling and how much did it cost. The lady said it was just a survey and they wanted me to lie on something for twenty minutes and then give them feedback. I thought it might be useful for me and for our members so I agreed that the man come at 4.00 p.m. the next day. I didn't want to be alone in the house with who she described as a male "therapist" so I asked Kath to come round.

He turned out to be a representative selling Tempur adjustable beds at more than £3,500 and relaxation mattresses at £1,500. We tried the product and told him it was not for us but I was really annoyed that he had come into my house under false pretences. He said the calls were made from a call centre in Glasgow.

Theft

On the 17th April I went to Somerfield in Willenhall. I did my shopping and as usual I had to ask people to lift items down from the shelves for me. This does mean I turn away from the trolley. When I came to pay for my shopping I realised that my purse had been stolen from my handbag which was in the trolley. I was careless because I hadn't zipped up the handbag and I shouldn't have left the bag in the trolley but it is easy to be wise after the event.

There wasn't much money in it only about £15 and some stamps belonging to the WRSG which I have now replaced. It actually contained a lot of loose change. It also had hearing aid batteries and Co-proxamol in it so I hope they did the thief some good.

The most annoying thing as always is that your personal stuff is in your purse but fortunately I keep my debit card and other cards separate so they were not stolen.

**I THINK THESE THINGS KEEP
HAPPENING TO GIVE ME
SOMETHING TO WRITE ABOUT!!!**

Dorothy

A song of Youth

A boy of twenty, your son, or mine,
A friend or a brother,
A boy so tall and fine,
With youthful shining eyes,
And so much love to give,
A life to share with someone,
A life so wonderful to live

But war and violence have little time for youth,
Go fight and kill, and die,
What good is love and truth?

So little time to live and so many wasted years,
Lying now where neither wind or snow can harm you,
And the world is full of tears,
But no tears or prayers can bring him back again,
And still the bitter wars rage on.

Brenda Mullaney

Carver Wolverhampton City Marathon
Sunday 2nd September 2007

As I have mentioned in the two previous editions of our newsletter the WRSG are beneficiaries of this year's Marathon. We are very keen to support the event and obviously to receive the funding. I am attending the monthly meetings and Joyce is organising the marshals which we have to provide. (No marshals no money!) At the meeting on the 2nd April we were asked to distribute the entry forms for the events. I know that our actual members will not be fit enough to take part but you may have family members who are interested. I am therefore enclosing one entry form with each newsletter. I am also informed that we will be able to have a table in West Park on the day. More about that when I know what it involves.

Co-proxamol

I have known for a couple of years that Co-proxamol was being withdrawn. Many of you will have already experienced this but it has now caught up with me. The reason for the withdrawal is that NICE (the National Institute for Clinical Excellence) say it is easy to accidentally overdose on it. After taking Co-proxamol for twenty years I felt a little anxious. I tried Co-codamol but I couldn't get them out of the packaging and I couldn't swallow them without cutting them in half so I am now trying soluble paracetamol.

Easter

When I cannot manage jobs I tend to blame my dysfunctional arthritic hands. When my plaster was removed I was perfectly safe driving but it was painful to do the seatbelt and the handbrake and then I found I couldn't get the car out of P for Parking and into gear. It is an automatic. Jessica, Jack and I took it to Motorworld. I explained to them that in the "old days" you just needed a mechanic for the car. Now you needed a mechanic/ electrician/ technology expert. I said that once upon a time to indicate you had to put your arm out of the window to turn right or make a circle to turn left (I think) and then cars had yellow indicators which popped out of the sides of the car. The cheeky monkeys then said "Yes Nan we know you were born in Victorian times."

A few days later I heard something rolling about in the car which I thought was the same problem. I asked Greg to sit in the car and listen while I drove it round the block. We had only gone a few yards when Greg said "this is the problem mom" and he picked up a gobstopper which Jack had left in the pocket of the car! Senior Moment?

The second week of the Easter holidays I had the children on Tuesday and Thursday. I went to Droitwich on the Wednesday. I didn't go in the pool or sauna because hot water doesn't suit the Lymphoedema in my lower legs but Sheila and I sat in the sun chatting and did a bit of shopping.



Our members had a very enjoyable therapeutic day out thanks to Andy, Alison, Billy and Amy Geeson

May

May's a month of happy sounds,
The hum of buzzing bees,
The chirp of little baby birds
And the song of a gentle breeze

The grass is green.
Flower blossoms I have seen.
The days are warm.
By evening it cools.
It's time to find the garden tools.

Spring

I love the spring.
For every day
There's something new
That's come to stay.
Another bud
Another bird
Another blade
The sun has stirred.

Spring

Spring makes the world a happy place
You see a smile on every face.
Flowers come out and birds arrive,
Oh, isn't it grand to be alive?

Kite Flying

On many spring days I wish that I
Could be a kite flying in the sky.
I would climb high toward the sun
And chase the clouds. Oh, what fun!
Whichever way the wind chanced to blow
Is the way that I would go
I'd fly up, up, up. I'd fly down, down, down.
Then I'd spin round and round and round.
Finally I'd float softly to the ground.

Springtime

A small green frog
On a big brown log;
A black and yellow bee
In a little green tree;
A red and yellow snake
By a blue-green lake,
All sat and listened
To red bird sing,
"Wake up, everybody,
It's spring! It's spring!"

The Dangers of a Wrong Email Address!

A Minneapolis couple decided to go to Florida to thaw out during a particularly cold winter. They planned to stay at the same hotel where they spent their honeymoon 20 years earlier.

Because of their hectic schedules, the husband left Minnesota and flew to Florida on Thursday, with his wife flying down the next day.

The husband checked into the hotel. There was a computer in his room so he decided to send an email to his wife. However, he accidentally left one letter out of the email address and, without realising the error, sent the email

Meanwhile, somewhere in Houston, Texas, a widow had just returned from her husband's funeral. He was a Minister who had had a heart attack and died. The widow checked her email, expecting messages from relatives and friends.

After reading the first message, she screamed and fainted. The widow's son rushed into the room and saw the computer which read:

To: My loving wife
Subject: I've arrived
Date: 16th October 2005

I know you're surprised to hear from me. They have computers here now and you are allowed to send emails to your loved ones. I've just arrived and have checked in. I see that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Looking forward to seeing you then Hope your journey will be as uneventful as mine was.

P.S. Sure is damn hot down here!



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