



# WRSG Newsletter

WOLVERHAMPTON RHEUMATOLOGY SUPPORT GROUP

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CARING IS SHARING

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**Editor:**

**Dorothy Darby**

Telephone: 01902 654417

E-mail [Dorothy.darby@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:Dorothy.darby@blueyonder.co.uk)

Web: [www.wrsg.org.uk](http://www.wrsg.org.uk)

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## Reminder - Information Session

We are having an information session on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> 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, one day a week for four consecutive week course which I am sure they will tell us about.

Admission slips are included with this newsletter for members who have booked places.

## Outing to Bridgemere Garden Centre

Sheila is arranging a trip to Bridgemere Garden Centre on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

The cost of the coach will be £5 per person.

We will leave Falkland Street Coach Park at 10.00 a.m and leave Bridgemere at 4.00 p.m. for the return journey.

To book places ring Sheila between 4.00 and 6.00 p.m. only please

Liz says this is the right time to buy our plants!

## Information Session

We have arranged an Information Session about the benefits system. on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> June, at the Holly Bush from 10.30 to 12.30 a.m. We will provide tea, coffee and cakes on arrival.

The talk will be given by Denise Pearson a Welfare Rights Officer working for Wolverhampton City Council. They are based at Heantun House, Salop Street Wolverhampton and undertake benefit advice and benefit take up campaigns for the Social Services department.

Members will be able to ask questions and there will be no charge for the event. I was also asked to include advice on the Direct Payment Scheme but Denise says that is covered by a different department so maybe that will be one for the future.

Booking forms will be included with the May newsletter.

April 1 is the 91st day of the year (92nd in leap years) in the Gregorian calendar.

April 1 is most notable in the Western world for being April Fools' Day.

### The Swiss Spaghetti Harvest

In 1957 the respected BBC news show *Panorama* announced that thanks to a very mild winter and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil, Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop. It accompanied this announcement with footage of Swiss peasants pulling strands of spaghetti down from trees. Huge numbers of viewers were taken in. Many called the BBC wanting to know how they could grow their own spaghetti tree. To this the BBC diplomatically replied that they should "place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best."

### Instant Color TV

In 1962 there was only one tv channel in Sweden, and it broadcast in black and white. The station's technical expert, appeared on the news to announce that, thanks to a new technology, viewers could convert their existing sets to display color reception. All they had to do was pull a nylon stocking over their TV screen. They proceeded to demonstrate the process. Thousands of people were taken in.

### The Left-Handed Whopper

In 1998 Burger King published a full page advertisement in *USA Today* announcing the introduction of a new item to their menu: a "Left-Handed Whopper" specially designed for the 32 million left-handed Americans. According to the advertisement, the new whopper included the same ingredients as the original Whopper (lettuce, tomato, hamburger patty, etc.), but all the condiments were rotated 180 degrees for the benefit of their left-handed customers. The following day Burger King issued a follow-up release revealing that although the Left-Handed Whopper was a hoax, thousands of customers had gone into restaurants to request the new sandwich. Simultaneously, according to the press release, "many others requested their own 'right handed' version."

### My "Posh" Home Improvements

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March - Bob the Decorator arrived on time. He says to tell you that he has been around a lot longer than Bob the Builder. I am very pleased with the colour scheme I chose and with his workmanship. If you need a reliable decorator his name is Robert Harris and he can be contacted on 01902 606873

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March – I left Bob to carry on and I attended the last Patient and Public Involvement Forum meeting. This organisation is being replaced with LINKs (Local Involvement Network but I don't know yet if I am joining that. We each received a certificate for our work.

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March - Again I left Bob to finish his work and I attended my Black Country Lymphoedema Support Network monthly meeting. We had an Easter bonnet competition and my hat came second! When I came home Bob had finished so I washed my 60 or so glass paperweights and put them back on the shelf.

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March – Couldn't move my hands after washing the heavy paperweights but job done and Caroline came round to change my nets for the spring/summer ones.

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March – Carpets cleaned - Not much to say about that except that they scrubbed up well!

I spent the weekend putting all my furniture back and the books, records, CDs and ornaments back in their homes.

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March – My suite arrived back on time. It has been re-covered by E. Marsh, Upholsterers and is lovely.

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March - The curtains were made and fitted by Blyth Brothers and again I would happily recommend them.

I can now sit back and enjoy it all!!!!

*Dorothy*

## My Don

Don died on the 28th February 1991. Although it has been seventeen years I have been thinking about him quite a lot during March. This is because I have been having this clearout and I suppose feeling a bit sentimental looking at the things I was getting rid of.

Don was Joinery Manager when he died and getting work for his men was the most stressful part of his job. When he died it was at the onset of the second recession and he spent that horrible snowy day going round building sites trying to get work.

Don served his apprenticeship in Woodworking machinery and joinery on Wolverhampton Council and when he asked my Dad if we could marry as you did in those distant days my Dad said yes because he worked for the Council. I think that was because my Dad thought Don's job would be secure. Loyalty between employers and employees doesn't count for much anymore but it did then.

Don's hobby was making furniture. Before we married we made a bedroom suite and a sideboard ready for our new house. Don's Mom was a saint because she let us make and store the furniture in her house and we made a mess as you can imagine because sawdust is very messy. She was also very proud of Don's work though!

When I was sorting my things out I found a school report of Don's. It was from Eastfield Boys School and he was aged 12. For woodwork it says 23 marks out of 30 Quite Good so you see he was showing potential even then.

A few years after we were married we sold the bedroom suite and used the money to buy timber to put fitted wardrobes in the three bedrooms which are still there to this day and still perfect. I always said that if the house fell down Don's woodwork would stay in place!

I still have the Hi-fi cabinet and the cabinet for crockery and glasses but my favourite piece is the wall clock which he made.

He made the clock face from twelve different coloured timbers. It was quite strange because we ordered the clock mechanism while we on holiday at Saundersfoot and the figures and fingers etc for the dial while we were in Weymouth. Although this was weeks apart they all arrived in the post one Saturday morning and Don was away up his shed to assemble the clock.

As I said earlier Don's job was quite stressful. If I could see that he was worried with a lot on his mind I would only have to say "Don could you make a telephone table" for example. Out would come his drawing board and his mood would lighten immediately because he had something else to think about.

If I am honest I would have to admit that he loved to escape to his workshop/shed at the bottom of the garden.

One Sunday after lunch I must have been bored. I asked Greg and Ashley if they would like to go the cinema to see Watership Down. They said yes please and I locked up and off we went. It was only when we came back and Don wasn't watching TV that I realised I had locked him in his shed. He wasn't cold because he had a Calor gas heater in there but when I opened the door full of apology to say he wasn't very pleased with me was putting it mildly!

I know that was really thoughtless of me and I don't know how I would have gone out without telling him where I was going. I certainly wasn't old enough for a senior moment so I cannot find an excuse. We never fell out for long though!

I think that my coming up here on the computer to do the newsletters is my escape. Sometimes it is really painful to type but thinking about what I am going to write takes my pain off my mind. People often say I do too much but to be honest if I sat downstairs thinking "Oh I do feel ill" Would it help? I don't think so.

*Dorothy*

## Fears and Phobias

This may surprise you considering how involved I am with the NHS but I have a real fear and phobia about going to the Doctors. Last summer I put off making an appointment with a problem for six weeks. When I eventually plucked up courage to go I was given a course of 7 tablets which sorted the problem. How stupid can you get!

This doesn't apply to my outpatient appointments in Rheumatology or Orthopaedics and that is because I don't think they are going to tell me anything I don't already know so it is obviously fear of the unknown which is my phobia. However since the beginning of 2008 I have done the bowel cancer screening test which arrived through the post and I have attended for my routine mammogram. It is a good feeling when these results come back clear. We are constantly told the importance of early diagnosis so it is my intention to try to overcome this fear and phobia.

*Dorothy*

### What is a phobia?

A phobia is an intense fear or feeling of anxiety that occurs only in a particular situation that frightens you.

This might be something as seemingly logical as a fear of heights, or as illogical as a fear of the colour green. At other times you don't feel anxious. For example, if you have a phobia of spiders (as millions of people do), you only feel anxious when there's a spider around, otherwise you feel fine.

About one in ten people has a significant phobia, although few people seek treatment. Phobias make people avoid situations they know will make them anxious, but this can make the phobia worse. A person's life can become increasingly dominated by the precautions they take to avoid a situation they fear.

You may know there's no real danger and you may feel embarrassed by your fear, but you're still unable to control it. It's better to confront your fears, even if it's in a very careful way or with the help of a trained therapist.

A phobia is more likely to go away if it began after a distressing or traumatic event.

### What's the treatment?

Cognitive behavioural therapy - a 'talking treatment' where you learn all about the thing or situation you are scared of and how to change your behaviour - has a high success rate in phobias. Your GP can refer you.

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

### Phobias and panic attacks - James Tighe

Part of the 'fight or flight' response, panic is an essential part of the body's defence system. But, occasionally, it becomes more serious, as with irrational fears and panic attacks.

Most of us have panicked with good reason at some time. The traffic light goes green, we start to cross the road. A car approaches fast and makes no sign of braking. To panic in this situation is normal - we run, and fast.

But what if a perfectly harmless everyday experience creates the same response or worse? If you experience panic for no apparent reason and completely without warning. While some people enjoy being scared - think of roller coasters - it's quite a different thing if you have no idea why you're scared or when it's going to stop.

### Common phobias

It's possible to be phobic about anything, but these are particularly common fears:

Dental treatment

Flying

Blood

Social phobias

Agoraphobia (open spaces)

When a person with a phobia comes into contact with the thing they're frightened of - or knows that they soon will - they develop some of the more immediate physical symptoms of anxiety. Anxiety is made up of a long list of symptoms, and different people develop different patterns of symptoms.

For many people, this is enough to make them completely avoid whatever they're dreading - a whole life can become structured around avoiding the situation or object. But sometimes it's unavoidable and a person with a phobia is forced into a situation they fear. For example, years of someone not going to the dentist ends in the need for emergency treatment, or someone suffers an accidental cut or has to attend a meeting that can't be avoided. Panic often follows.

The word 'often' is important here - panic isn't inevitable, and it doesn't always follow. Many people with a phobia surprise themselves and come through the situation, even though they find it highly unpleasant.

#### Symptoms of panic attacks

For those who do panic, the symptoms are:

Fast, pounding heartbeat

Difficulty catching your breath

Chest pain

Flushing and sweating

Feeling sick

Trembling

Dizziness

Dry mouth

Needing to go to the toilet

Feeling faint

This experience can be so intense that the person becomes convinced that they're having a heart attack, which adds to their feeling of panic.

Some people also begin to feel that the reactions of their body are so extreme and so out of control that they're simply an observer of it all.

Though they don't describe any kind of out-of-body experience, they do describe feeling as though they become detached from what's going on, as though the whole situation had taken on an unreal quality. This is referred to as 'depersonalisation'. It sounds as though it may be a relief from the panic attack, but it is, in fact, even more unpleasant.

There's another group of people who experience panic attacks apparently spontaneously. This is often associated with general anxiety - ongoing, grumbling symptoms coming to a peak.

But panic attacks also occur out of the blue. When this happens, the fear of it reoccurring in the same situation can easily develop, leading to a phobia or general anxiety that becomes self-feeding.

#### How many people are affected?

Some phobias are more common than others. Up to ten per cent of people a year experience a phobia of flying, dentists or of blood. These are referred to as the simple phobias.

Social phobia is less common, affecting about 25 people in 1,000 each year. Agoraphobia occurs in about 30 people in every 1,000 a year, and it's roughly twice as frequent among women. Panic disorder affects between ten and 30 people per 1,000 in a year - again, it's roughly twice as frequent among women.

#### What can I do to help myself?

The first step is to break the vicious cycle that builds up. Learning relaxation techniques is a good way to do this. Your body instinctively becomes tense - it's not a response that we learn - and relaxation also has to be consciously learned.

There are two types of relaxation exercise - 'guided fantasy' and 'muscle tension'. Relaxation is not an immediate fix for the problem and, like all skills, is only acquired through practice.

You can use the thought-monitoring charts to rate what goes through your mind and how anxious you feel in a phobic situation. Then, using the relaxation techniques, try to reduce your anxiety in the phobic situation. This takes practice.

This article was last reviewed in September 2006.

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Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit.

Wisdom is not putting it in fruit salad

### The curse of the plastic bag

Plastic bags they are everywhere,  
Hedgerow, beaches, even my street,  
Blowing about in the wind,  
Getting under my feet

Animals are suffering too,  
And they are ruining the countryside,  
Just get one stuck to your shoe,  
And boy how you will slide.

Buy three items from a shop,  
And get a bag for every one,  
We have got to make a stand now,  
And this battle could be won

My mother carried a green string bag,  
When full how it would grow,  
My brother and I would drag it home,  
Painfully and very slow

Is there a solution to this problem?  
Or have we left it too late,  
We are drowning in a sea of bags,  
Is this to be our fate?

*Bren*

Oh Dear

Now even my friends are making me feel  
guilty about these plastic bags.  
As I said in a previous newsletter I didn't  
learn to drive until I was 47 years old. I  
struggled with children, pushchairs and  
shopping bags on buses or I walked and I  
didn't invent these plastic bags.

However when I do my weekly shop at the  
supermarket I ask the checkout staff to  
pack my bags for me and I always add  
"Could you not make them heavy please as  
I cannot lift them from the car into the  
house." I usually have about six bags which  
I use for my rubbish. I would not put waste  
food into my bin without wrapping it first.  
Do I carry on as I am or do I try to manage  
with fewer bags and struggle thereby saving  
the planet?

Well I have just received my first Internet  
shopping delivered from Sainsbury's and  
guess what? They are still in carrier bags. I  
thought they might have delivered in  
cardboard boxes!

*Dorothy*

### Referrals become easier with Choose and Book

Making and reviewing outpatient referrals  
using Choose and Book is easier after a  
recent upgrade to the electronic referral  
service.

The more user friendly system upgrade was  
delivered on time and to budget with  
improvements largely determined by user  
input. Consultation took place with a wide  
range of users and stakeholders, including  
patient groups and clinicians across all 10  
Strategic Health Authorities.

Some significant enhancements were made,  
for example, the patient facing web  
application that allows patients to book  
their own appointments via the web was  
greatly improved and streamlined following  
feedback from patient consultations. In  
addition Choose and Book's screen layouts  
available to GPs was changed to enable  
easier access to referral information.

The role of Choose and Book in the NHS is  
now well established. All NHS hospitals are  
now using Choose and Book, along with 90  
per cent of GP practices in England, and  
there are 22,000 bookings taking place  
every day, 115,000 every week. Dr Stephen  
Miller, Medical Director for the Choose and  
Book programme said,

"Choose and Book is becoming the  
everyday method of referral across the  
NHS. Around 50 per cent of all patient  
referrals to see a specialist are now going  
through Choose and Book. Over six million  
patients have now been referred through  
the system and it is patients who are  
benefiting most from the convenience of the  
Choose and Book system."

Following the successful delivery of release  
3.6, Choose and Book's next release 4.0, is  
scheduled for April 2008. This new release  
will contain a number of important changes  
which will support Free Choice which  
means from April the majority of patients  
being referred to hospital will be able to  
choose where they wish to be treated

## The tale of nicotine Anne

This is the tale on fag ash Anne,  
Who puffed cigarettes like desperate Dan  
She ignored her little children's pleas,  
As they cried out on bended knees

Oh mother dear please do not smoke,  
For when you do it makes us choke,  
And poor little Billy feels so bad,  
When you blow smoke rings at our old dad,

Now as time went on she began to wheeze.  
Starting to gasp and cough, and sneeze,  
and although she began to fade away,  
She carried on puffing every day.

With a hacking cough and a chesty rattle,  
Climbing up stairs was such a battle,  
When out walking she would cough and splutter,  
Sometimes looking for fag ends in the gutter

Then one day the doctor said,  
Give it up Anne or you will soon be dead,  
So Anne crawled home a shattered nag,  
Climbed into bed and lit her last fag.

Love, Bren.

I probably shouldn't print this because it is not politically correct but here goes anyway.

During a visit to the mental asylum, a visitor asked the Director:  
"How do you determine whether or not a patient should be institutionalised?"  
"Well," said the Director, "we fill up a bathtub, and then we offer a teaspoon, a teacup and a bucket to the patient and ask him or her to empty the bathtub."  
"Oh, I understand," said the visitor.  
"A normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the spoon or the teacup."  
"No." said the Director,  
"A normal person would pull the plug. Do you want a bed near the window?"

**I BET YOU WENT FOR THE BUCKET TOO... DO YOU WANT THE BED NEXT TO MINE?**

I received this in an e-mail from Ashley

After getting all of Pope Benedict's luggage loaded into the limo, and He doesn't travel light, the driver notices that the Pope is still standing on the curb

'Excuse me, Your Holiness,' says the driver, 'Would you please take your seat so we can leave?'

'Well, to tell you the truth,' says the Pope, 'they never let me drive at the Vatican, and I'd really like to drive today.'

'I'm sorry but I cannot let you do that. I'd lose my job! And what if something should happen?' protests the driver, wishing he'd never gone to work that morning.

'There might be something extra in it for you,' says the Pope.

Reluctantly, the driver gets in the back as the Pope climbs in behind the wheel. The driver quickly regrets his decision when, after exiting the airport, the Pontiff floors it, accelerating the limo to 105 mph.

'Please slow down, Your Holiness!!!' pleads the worried driver, but the Pope keeps the pedal to the metal until they hear sirens.

'Oh, dear God, I'm gonna lose my license,' moans the driver.

The Pope pulls over and rolls down the window as the cop approaches, but the cop takes one look at him, goes back to his motorcycle, and gets on the radio.

'I need to talk to the Chief,' he says to the dispatcher.

The Chief gets on the radio and the cop tells him that he's stopped a limo going a hundred and five.

'So bust him,' says the Chief.

'I don't think we want to do that - he's really important,' said the cop.

The Chief exclaimed, 'All the more reason!'

'No, I mean really important,' said the cop.

The Chief then asked, 'Who have you got there, the Mayor?'

Cop: 'Bigger.'

Chief: 'Governor?'

Cop: 'Bigger.'

'Well,' said the Chief, 'Who is it?'

Cop: 'I think it's God!'

Chief: 'What makes you think it's God?'

Cop: 'He's got the Pope as a chauffeur!'

### Understanding – From Julie Stead

A farmer had some puppies he needed to sell. He painted a sign advertising the 4 pups and nailed it to a post on the edge of his yard. As he was driving the last nail into the post, he felt a tug on his overalls. He looked down into the eyes of little boy. 'Mister,' he said, 'I want to buy one of your puppies. 'Well,' said the farmer, as he rubbed the sweat off the back of his neck, 'These puppies come from fine parents and cost a good deal of money.' The boy dropped his head for a moment. Then reaching deep into his pocket, he pulled out a handful of change and held it up to the farmer. 'I've got thirty-nine cents. Is that enough to take a look?' 'Sure,' said the farmer. And with that he let out a whistle. 'Here, Dolly!' he called. Out from the doghouse and down the ramp ran Dolly followed by four little balls of fur.

The little boy pressed his face against the chain link fence. His eyes danced with delight. As the dogs made their way to the fence, the little boy noticed something else stirring inside the doghouse. Slowly another little ball appeared this one noticeably smaller. Down the ramp it slid. Then in a somewhat awkward manner, the little pup began hobbling toward the others, doing its best to catch up.

'I want that one,' the little boy said, pointing to the runt.

The farmer knelt down at the boy's side and said, 'Son, you don't want that puppy. He will never be able to run and play with you like these other dogs would.'

With that the little boy stepped back from the fence, reached down and began rolling up one leg of his trousers. In doing so he revealed a steel brace running down both sides of his leg attaching itself to a specially made shoe. Looking back up at the farmer, he said, 'You see, sir, I don't run too well myself and he will need someone who understands.' With tears in his eyes, the farmer reached down and picked up the little pup. Holding it carefully, he handed it to the little boy.

'How much?' asked the little boy. 'No charge,' answered the farmer, 'There's no charge for love.'

The world is full of people who need someone who understands.

New Cross Hospital is applying for Foundation Trust status. It is their intention to involve as many local support groups and voluntary organisations as possible.

I thought therefore it would be of interest to members to understand what Foundation Trust status means:- Being a Foundation Trust allows things to be done differently from other hospitals, which means they can do more to improve the care and support they give to their patients.

### What is an NHS Foundation Trust?

Through their members and the Members' Council, NHS Foundation Trusts are better able to listen and respond to the views of local people, patients and their staff. Foundation Trusts remain firmly part of the NHS, but have greater freedom from central Government control. NHS Foundation Trusts have opportunities to borrow money to invest in improving services that meet local needs. They also have to meet national quality standards and be inspected in the same way as other hospitals.

### What are the benefits of being a Foundation Trust? -

Being a Foundation Trust helps to:  
Deliver improvements in patient care.  
Be more open and accountable.  
Strengthen links with local people.  
Build on the work already done to make the services more sensitive to the needs of patients

### How does our Foundation Trust work?

NHS Foundation Trusts have members (people just like you) and a Members' Council – the Council is elected by the public, patient and staff members and more than half are local people or patients. There are also places reserved for our partner organisations.

### It is important to remember:

Foundation Trusts are part of the NHS  
NHS care is still free at Foundation Trust hospitals  
Foundation Trusts have to meet the same quality standards as the rest of the NHS

### Disclaimer:

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