

# Cancer Connect

The St George's newsletter for people affected by cancer

Issue 3, Summer 2018



## Getting ready for surgery

**St George's has launched Get Set 4 Surgery, a weekly 'surgery school' for patients with cancer who need major surgery. Groups of up to 25 people are invited to attend a two hour session with their clinical team, to prepare them mentally and physically for their operation.**

The topics covered in the 'pre-habilitation' session include the benefits of good nutrition, increasing activity, breathing exercises, smoking cessation, alcohol education and managing anxiety. This will help promote a successful recovery.

Patients are encouraged to bring along a plus one, to support and encourage them to feel informed and empowered to influence their own recovery.

Carolyn Johnston, Consultant Anaesthetist, said: "In the waiting time before surgery, when patients feel most anxious, we are able to give them help and information to prepare themselves both physically and mentally for the challenges ahead."

This initiative is part of the Surgical Pathway Experience project, under the St George's & Macmillan: Cancer Care Partnership for Patient Experience Partnership Programme. It is hoped it will be extended to more patients in the future.

Nearly 200 patients have attended so far, and feedback has been very positive. One patient who attended a session said, "There are a lot of people (nurses and doctors) who actually care; meeting them has been very helpful."

## In this issue....

### Going back to school

Bruce's experience of getting ready for surgery

### Voice Listening Events

Setting up a peer telephone support service for patients

### Look Good Feel Better workshop for men

### The new Ambulatory Oncology Care Unit

The official launch

### Clinical hypnotherapy

A new service for chemotherapy induced peripheral neuropathy



## Going back to school at St George's!

"It gave me a better indication of what to expect – the experience is not as scary as it first seems."

**Bruce**



**Bruce, age 60, came along to a 'Get Set 4 Surgery' session at St George's a week before his operation for bowel cancer in May this year.**

Having not had an operation since he was in his 20's, it was a good opportunity for Bruce to find out what he could expect before, during and after the operation, so there would be no surprises on the day.

At the session, a number of different health professionals involved in Bruce's surgical care were on hand to talk about a wide range of important issues - from nutrition and exercise through to mental health and well-being.

Bruce said: "It reinforces what your expectations are for your hospital experience and addressed any concerns I may have had".

The purpose of the Get Set 4 Surgery sessions is to help patients prepare for surgery and, with the support of healthcare professionals, positively influence their own recovery by following small and easy lifestyle changes.

Whilst not all the other participants at the session were having the same surgery as Bruce, hearing other patients ask their questions was helpful and reassuring.

Even when there is limited time between Get Set 4 Surgery and having surgery, knowing what to expect from the moment you come into hospital until you are told you can go home, eases stress. Bruce said, "It helps put your mind at rest. I knew that I would be expected to get out of bed early on and I was able to ask the physio for some written exercises to follow when I went home". For Bruce, enjoying a weekend away before coming into St George's was his strategy to help him cope positively with what lay ahead – but all patients are different.

Bruce's experience of Get Set 4 Surgery and question and answer sessions was so positive that he has kindly volunteered to help the team to make the sessions even more interactive and engaging for the participants.

Being informed and knowing what to expect can help debunk any myths held by participants and lead to greater confidence, particularly when it comes to voicing concerns and asking questions.



## Voice Listening Event

**Listening events are just one of the ways you can share your cancer experiences as a patient, family member or friend, with other people affected by cancer and St George's Hospital staff.**

We want to hear your ideas and suggestions about what we do well and what can be improved. The theme of our most recent event was the CanChat peer telephone support service that our core Voice group wants to set up, in response to feedback from patients at past events. Voice co-facilitated two focus groups consisting of 22 respondents in total. The purpose was to research the need and touch points of patients and carers for the service, and inform Voice of the best way to communicate and introduce CanChat.

If you are interested in learning more about Voice and involvement opportunities that fit in with your availability, skills and experience, and interests, please go to <https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/service/cancer-services/voice/> or contact the Macmillan Information and Support Centre (see back page for details).

## St George's launches Look Good Feel Better workshop for men



Participants at the workshop

**St George's is the first hospital in London to host the workshop for men run by a charity Look Good Feel Better.**

The charity, in conjunction with the Macmillan Information and Support Centre at St George's, host free 'pampering therapy' workshops on skincare and makeup for women undergoing cancer treatment.

The charity is in the process of developing a programme for men, and the events at St George's will help to see how the workshop is received.

During the session in May, eight men from St George's 'Men Living Well' Support Group for metastatic prostate cancer received advice about skincare, sun protection, shaving and nail care.

Estelle le Galliot, St George's Macmillan Cancer Information Officer, said: "The Look Good Feel Better workshop is a real treat with all walking away with useful tips, luxury products and visibly more relaxed. We are very pleased with this new initiative and we will look forward to running it again."

## New Ambulatory Oncology Care Unit at St George's Hospital



Staff at the launch of the Ambulatory Oncology Care Unit

**Patients and staff celebrated the official launch of our Ambulatory Oncology Care Unit (AOCU) in April.**

Opened as part of our cancer experience improvement programme with Macmillan, the service gives cancer patients rapid access to specialist care when they experience complications from their medication or symptoms.

In many cases it means they can avoid attending the Emergency Department (ED), and are treated by someone they know.

A smaller scale version has been running since June 2017, but the new service has a larger clinic room and

extended hours, meaning double the amount of patients can be seen.

Dr Mehran Afshar, Oncology Consultant, and our Clinical Lead for Acute Oncology Services said: "The new service is helping ensure we get patients to the right place for their urgent care, and in less time.

"Patient feedback shows that 60% of patients seen so far would have gone to ED without the unit, and 98% of patients rated their care as good or excellent."

The new AOCU service is in operation from Monday to Friday 9-5pm, from Gordon Smith Ward.

## Clinical hypnotherapy for chemotherapy induced peripheral neuropathy



**Nupur Agarwal,**  
Clinical Hypnotherapist

An exciting new service is available for patients with blood or lymphatic cancers who have peripheral neuropathy as a side effect of their treatment, using clinical hypnotherapy from the Full Circle team.

Peripheral neuropathy (PN) can be a side effect of some chemotherapy medications and develops when nerves in the body's extremities – such as the hands, feet and arms – are damaged. This can cause pain, numbness, tingling, loss of balance and co-ordination.

Hypnotherapy is aimed at directing a person's imagination in a way that helps elicit changes in their perceptions, sensations, feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Clinical hypnotherapy is when this is harnessed to treat a medical or psychological problem.

Patients attend a number of sessions with our clinical hypnotherapist, Nupur Agarwal. The aim is to support, and sometimes alleviate, symptoms of PN such as reducing the amount of pain medication they need to take. It is also a very relaxing therapy that patients can continue to practice at home.

For further information, contact <https://www.fullcirclefund.org.uk/> or the Macmillan Information and Support Centre

## RESOURCES

### Macmillan Information and Support Centre

Ground Floor, Grosvenor Wing,  
St George's Hospital  
Tel: 020 8725 2677

Open: Mon – Fri, 10am – 4.30pm  
[www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

Information and support

### Paul's Cancer Support Centre

20 – 22 York Road, Battersea,  
London SW11 3QA  
Tel: 020 7924 3924

[www.paulscancersupport.org.uk](http://www.paulscancersupport.org.uk)

Offers individual and group support (including Asian and African-Caribbean support groups), complementary therapies and a home visiting service.

### South East Cancer Help Centre

2 Purley Road, Purley,  
Surrey CR8 2HA  
Tel: 020 8668 0974

[www.sechc.org.uk](http://www.sechc.org.uk)

Offers individual and group support, complementary therapies and information.

### Macmillan Cancer Support

Help Line: 0808 808 00 00  
(Mon – Fri, 9am - 8pm)

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

For details of information and support centres and cancer support groups, benefits advice and practical, medical, financial and emotional support.

The Cancer Connect editorial team would love to hear your comments about our newsletter.



**Beverley van der Molen**

If you would like to make a comment, want more information about any article or have a suggestion for a future article, please email Beverley van der Molen, Macmillan Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Co-ordinator at [beverley.vandermolen@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:beverley.vandermolen@stgeorges.nhs.uk) or contact the Macmillan Information and Support Centre on **020 8725 2677**.

You can also drop in at the centre, which is on the Ground Floor, Grosvenor Wing, St George's Hospital.

**St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust,**  
Blackshaw Road, Tooting, London SW17 0QT  
Tel 020 8672 1255 [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)



**Voice**  
Cancer patient  
and carer user  
group



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WE CHANGE.  
WE CARE.**

Driving excellence in cancer care, together



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