

Keeping Well?

The Newsletter of the Nuffield Patient Group

Summer 2018 Issue 21

Welcome!

It's our 21st edition of *Keeping Well?!!* Does that mean we're grown up now? It's certainly time for some sort of celebration, because it is also the 70th anniversary of the founding of the National Health Service.

The Nuffield Practice did its bit with a lively day of cakes, dressing up, tombola and general merriment, all broadcast to the world by Radio Oxford (see page 4). Our ace cartoonist Tim also got in on the act, reliving that historic day in July 1948 (page 4).

We have a patient story from Lindy Castell, who reports her experiences of having a pacemaker fitted (page 1) and our eclectic mix continues with the latest news of a new breastfeeding support service (page 2), two new exercise initiatives (page 5) and the latest evidence on ear wax removal (page 6).

One thing that is not so welcome is the upturn in the number of people suffering bites from the Blandford Fly. If you wonder what that's all about, turn to page 2.

What it's like to have a pacemaker fitted

By Lindy Castell

Continued from *Keeping Well?* Issue 20...

At 07.15a.m. I arrived in the Cardiology Day Ward (a mixed ward) at the John Radcliffe. A friendly male nurse ushered me to a cubicle to change into my gown. I decided to switch off my mobile phone, and settled down with a puzzle book.

"My" surgeon was soon sitting on the bed, explaining the procedure. His first question flummoxed me "What side would you prefer your pacemaker to be?" I admitted to being left-handed but then actually found it surprisingly difficult to pin down which I used the most. I decided to opt for the right-hand side. A sample pacemaker was about half the length and half the thickness of a small matchbox – 75% is taken up by the battery.



Blood samples were taken via a cannula, and intravenous antibiotics were administered just prior to the operation. In the operating theatre a cheerful group of nurses checked my i.d. and settled me comfortably on the table. The operation was quite tiring with a lot of pummelling

Continued overleaf

but virtually no serious discomfort after the local anaesthetic was administered. A sterile gauze tent was erected around my head (I had to keep my head to the left to avoid infecting the wound).

Back on the ward "my" nurse undertook an ECG and checked the pacemaker site with a magnet to ensure it was working. My BP was 170/91 immediately on return to the Ward; then 150/80 and 143/63 at 20 minute intervals. Post-operative bruises were impressive! I was given coffee and buttered toast – a real treat after my 12-hour fast. The next excursion was in a

wheelchair through quiet corridors until we arrived at X-ray, a 5-min session, then back to the Ward and lunch. The carbohydrate subsequently put me to sleep for an hour – judging by the snores from the next door cubicle it worked for him too!

Post-operative instructions: sadly, I'm NOT allowed to drive for one week. Importantly, I must NOT raise the pacemaker arm above my shoulder for at least 2 weeks (difficult – but OK if I can raise the occasional G&T!).

Blandford fly - insect bites

What is a Blandford Fly?

A Blandford fly is a blood sucking black fly, they are about 2-3 mm in length. They give a nasty and painful bite during the summer months, particularly in May and June. The flies are typically found near areas of water and there has been a rise in the number of people severely affected by the bites in these types of areas, both rural and urban.

What to look out for?

The insects fly less than 0.5 m from the ground, resulting in bites to the lower limbs. These bites cause small to large blisters which can be up to 22 cm in diameter and purple lesions. The saliva from the fly can cause intense pain, local irritation, redness, swelling, joint pain and even a high temperature of 38°C and over.

Treatment

Local reactions can last for several days or longer, but can be symptomatically treated by over-the-counter products.



Antibiotics are rarely needed, although scratching the irritated areas can rupture the skin, leading to infections.

To avoid being bitten by the Blandford fly,



especially when near rivers, stream and grassland;

- Cover up, covering legs and ankles
- Apply a quality insect repellent
- Avoid swarms of insects.

If you do get bitten from what you think is a Blandford fly, make sure you;

- Clean the bite with soap and water
- Do not scratch, as this may lead to an infection
- Apply a cold press or ice pack to reduce reddening and swelling
- Take or use antihistamine tablets and creams
- Take pain killers if needed
- Cover large blisters with dry, non adhering dressing

Seek medical attention if the bite shows signs of swelling, is uncomfortable, red lines appear within the groin or armpit area, you have a persistent high fever, spreading redness or hotness around the bite (longer than 3 days). If you have anything more severe, seek immediate help (call 999).

Witney is getting a new breastfeeding support service!

Experienced midwives Nina van Schaick and Rachel Yuen will be welcoming breastfeeding mums to the Bethany Room at Witney Methodist Church every Tuesday from 10 a.m. until noon.

This is an opportunity to access free breastfeeding help with specific issues for babies up to 8 weeks of age in a relaxed environment with ample tea and biscuits.

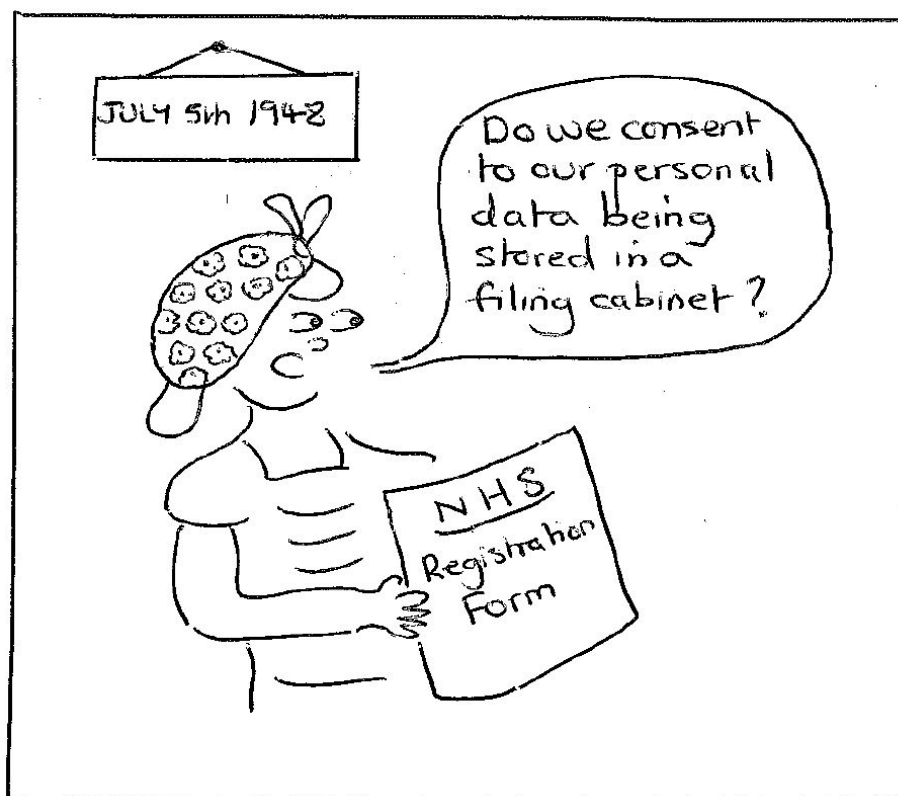
Nina van Schaick says:

“As UNICEF baby-friendly trained midwives and experienced breastfeeding mothers we know that no feeding journey looks the same. We offer reassuring and compassionate care with time to listen to your individual needs.”

There is no need to book, just come along. Hungry babies will get priority but you can always take

the opportunity to have a cuppa and browse their small library of books if your little one hasn't read the schedule and is having a snooze. Siblings and partners are welcome under your supervision.

For more information please visit their website; www.yourmidwives.net



Tim Hughes

NHS 70th Birthday Party on the 5th July

BBC Radio Oxford came to The Nuffield Practice to broadcast the Lilley Allen show live from 1-4pm in the afternoon. This was a special show to celebrate the 70th birthday of the NHS and we were proud to be chosen from a number of



practices that had volunteered to host the event.

We invited representatives of some of the organisations we support and that support us. Judith le Good, ex-employee and sometimes locum Health Care Assistant was here to promote her Health Walks (meet every Tuesday here at the Nuffield Practice at 2pm). We also had Tamsyn Wymer representing parkrun, which we have just started promoting, as a brand new 'parkrun practice. Carers Oxfordshire were here as were the Community Information Network.



To add to the sense of occasion we organised a fun day with a 1940s theme. All of the staff dressed in the style of the period, and we had music of the era playing all day. We decided to



make the day a fundraising event too and arranged a Tombola, a Raffle and a cake stall, with all prizes and cakes donated by staff and patients. One of our patients even baked a special cake for the occasion.



We raised £1,100 for the Oxford Hospitals Charity which is a local charity which supports the different departments and wards of Oxford University Hospitals, helping to provide the best medical equipment, research and facilities for patients and staff.

We would like to thank all of our patients for their support and generosity; without you we would not have had such a fantastic day!



From the Practice

We are now a parkrun practice!

For those of you who have not heard of parkrun, it is a 5km run that takes place in parks all over the country, every Saturday at 9am.

Parkrun UK has launched a new 'parkrun practice' initiative with the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP). Under this initiative, GP practices across the UK are encouraged to develop close links with their local parkrun and to prescribe participation. The Nuffield Practice has signed up to this scheme and we are now a parkrun practice (the certificate is in the post). We will be actively encouraging our patients to participate; you do not have to run; you can walk with, or without



parkrun say that taking part can benefit health and wellbeing through increased physical activity, skill development, friendships and socialisation, mutual support and personal empowerment. The events are all run by volunteers and studies have shown that volunteering itself can decrease rates of depression, reduce social isolation and improve self-esteem.

You do not have to be a runner to take part; you can walk and you can take along dogs, children and pushchairs. Come along and join in the fun!

The Witney parkrun starts at the West Witney Sports and Social Club on Burford Road. Parking is available.

Seated exercise classes at The Nuffield Practice

Physical activity is essential for keeping the body fit and functioning to it's best ability, preventing long term health problems, improving mood and psychological wellbeing and can provide opportunities to meet other people within the community.

Research provides evidence that physical activity has many benefits for those people diagnosed with diabetes. It helps improve weight, HbA1c readings and general wellbeing. It can often be difficult to find activities to suite everyone and can be daunting to those that haven't done much exercise for a long time. West Oxfordshire District Council appreciate this and are funding local activities for people with diabetes .



The Nuffield Practice will be providing a taster session on Friday 5th October from 6 pm.

The evening is limited to 25 spaces. If you have diabetes and are interested in attending, please contact The Nuffield Practice on 01993 703641.

Health walks are also provided by The Nuffield Practice, for all abilities, every Tuesday afternoon at 2 pm. Contact Judith Legood for more details.

Friday 5th October 6.00 -7.30pm

The evening would include:

- 6.00 Welcome drink
- 6.15 Welcome address
- 6.25 Patient testimonial
- 6.35 Presentation on local initiatives
- 7.00 Seated Exercise Session
- 7.25 Comments
- 7.30 Finish



Evidence Matters

by Sarah Chapman

I work for Cochrane UK, the UK hub of an international network of people working together to help people make informed decisions about health care. It does this through doing systematic reviews, which bring together the results of clinical trials to answer questions about what helps or harms in health care.

Ear drops to remove earwax: what works best?

Earwax is part of the ear's self-cleaning mechanism and usually works its own way out, but it can cause problems when it obstructs the ear canal, and we may then need to do something to help its removal.

We no longer use leek juice or carbolic acid to soften wax, but other liquids suggested over the past 2000 years are still our go-to earwax softeners, including plain or salty water and oils, such as



almond or olive. The method described by the Celsus in 1st century Rome, of instilling something to soften the wax and washing it out with tepid water, is also familiar to us today, along with the mechanical removal of softened wax with an instrument. His instrument of choice was an ear scoop, and Henry VIII made a present of a golden ear scoop pendant to Anne Boleyn, some time before he decided to remove her ears, along with the rest of her head.

It's even been put to uses that seem very strange to us now, such as healing wounds and curing colic.

Wax taken from a dog's left ear and hung round the sick person's neck was believed to cure fever or fits.

Before we laugh too loudly at the folly of our forebears, let's remember that in our own times people pay good money to have candles put into their ears and lit, believing that this will draw the wax out. There is no evidence that this is an effective method of wax removal, it can be dangerous, and it's right up there in terms of nonsense treatments with necklaces of dog earwax.

The latest evidence

A Cochrane Review brings together the best available evidence on which liquid might be best, and whether using something is better than nothing at all. The drops tested included water, saline (salty water), other water-based drops, or oil-based drops. There were 10 studies, but only six (with 361 adults and children) had data on complete wax clearance.

It's disappointing that the evidence is of low quality and leaves us not knowing whether one type is better than another. The researchers note that using any of the drops to soften earwax seems to be safe and well tolerated, and while hypersensitivity might occur with some active components of drops, that wouldn't happen with water or saline.

So, is it worth using anything at all?

We can't be sure! Just one study compared using water or saline drops for five days with doing nothing. Whilst this evidence suggests that using drops may increase the likelihood of the ears becoming completely clear of wax, there is a very wide range of possibility for the size of the effect. Without treatment, on average 5 in 100 people will have complete clearance of wax, spontaneously. It is estimated that with drops this may increase this to 6 in 100, or as many as 84 in 100.

You can see the review in full at www.thecochranelibrary.com.

Aaron K, Cooper TE, Warner L, Burton MJ. Ear drops for the removal of ear wax. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2018, Issue 7. Art. No.: CD012171. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD012171.pub2.

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