

*Neurology conference, 'Experts together'.*

Our 'Experts Together' conference on 28th March was attended by 150 delegates from 11 counties and was a knockout day. Susan Greenfield gave the keynote address on the plasticity of the brain, (how it keeps on mending itself throughout our lives), then one after another our expert speakers delivered riveting presentations on their subjects. The 'networking' during the breaks was great to see and we have no doubt everyone went home very well informed and better able to deliver.

Delegates had updates on the management of MS, Parkinson's, Polio, Motor Neurone Disease, Stroke, Epilepsy, neuro-physiotherapy Speech & Language therapy, and Functional Imaging. Clear and recurring themes kept pouring from the experts: the poor resources for neurology and allied services; the need for prompt, expert, individual assessment; and the need for tailor made care and support. Exactly as we hear constantly from members!

Newbury racecourse proved a superb venue. We are confident the day raised over £5k for our nurse fund. We are hugely grateful to our 4 sponsors, Charles, Lucas & Marshall, Awards for All, British Polio Fellowship, Berkshire Branch, and Publicity Project (Newbury) Limited. We also thank all who exhibited with their stands. Special thanks go to Dr Christine Collin for her help with organisation.

And well done to Hilary Hinchliffe for her vision and lead, to her conference team of Sandra Paget, Chreanne Montgomery-Smith and Molly Davison, and to the many other volunteer helpers who made it all happen on the day. And the next one? We'll let you know!

*Gold and silver from the snowdrops.*

It was crisp and only *slightly* damp underfoot, on 9th February, when our volunteers were out at Welford Park, at the invitation of Debbie and John Puxley. We collected a magnificent £2,368.96 in voluntary donations from the visitors who had come from far and wide to see the Welford snowdrops. Our warmest thanks to the Puxleys for allowing visitors to their beautiful estate, and for their help to us in raising such a sum.

*Specialist neurology nurses.*

The nurse post we aim to help fund is a general neurology specialist. We believe we have raised enough now to pump-prime a post, and we continue in discussions with the professionals to ensure other important details are sorted out. We are confident these can be agreed and are delighted to be able to make a positive contribution to this idea.

*Physiotherapy service review.*

Readers will be disappointed to learn that the review of the local NHS physiotherapy service has been delayed due to reasons beyond everyone's control. We can only urge that the review is completed as quickly as possible. Existing services are not meeting demand and the sooner this is actioned the better!

*Surveying health and social care needs.*

More happily, we are pleased to be in ongoing discussions with Newbury & Community NHS PCT on a fresh round of surveying the health and social care needs of local neurology patients, building nicely on our previous work.

## *What's that number?*

From our inception we have challenged the NHS to look into the resources it makes available for neurology patients. Therefore we welcome warmly the national Neurological Alliance re-publishing, in bang up-to-date form, the most detailed and accurate neurology incidence and prevalence data ever available. The headlines? There are some 10 million people in the UK living with a neurological condition with a significant impact on their lives. Over 1 million are disabled by their condition. Almost one in 5 hospital admissions are for a neurological problem.

Yet on average there is only one neurologist per 177,000 patients, whereas the average figure across Europe is more like one per 30,000! How can neurology patients get a fair slice of service when neuro clinicians are so thin on the ground? This is a national issue which will take time to resolve. In the meantime we call on all service providers in the region to look at their provision for neurology patients and make sure it is fairly resourced, easily accessible, and well integrated, so as to be something from which local patients really can get maximum benefit.

## *Open meetings and open minds.*

Alliance members and our guest speakers alike have been keen to describe ways in which the statutory and voluntary sectors could, and should, work closer together to plug some of the gaps still evident in the services needed by neurology patients. Sue Pascoe, local Intermediate Care Manager (our February guest), and Paul Lynch, local Physiotherapy Service Manager (our April guest), both gave enthusiastic descriptions of what their services are about, and how they are likely to re-shape in the future. We look forward to similar exchanges with other open meeting speakers as the year rolls forward. Do try to get along!

## *Web's away!*

Yes! It's time to get logged on, and tap in

**[www.wbna.org.uk](http://www.wbna.org.uk)**

where you will find the Alliance Website ready and waiting to inform, and enthuse you. We plan to expand the information pages to make the site as fully informative as such oracles should be, and look forward to any comments readers and visitors to the site may have. Well done to Alex King and our new Treasurer, David Woodhead for their efforts on this.

We also have 1000 Website information cards to anyone needing such addresses. These carry details of national neurology voluntary sector Websites, and are ideal for any surfer needing to find out more about their neurology condition, how it might be managed, etc., etc..

## *Diary dates to note:*

Thursday 5th June. **Open meeting.**  
Guest: Catherine Mountford, Director for Neurosciences Commissioning, TVStHA.  
1. 45 p.m. for 2. p.m. at St Joseph's hall.

Wednesday 30th July. **Open meeting.**  
Guest: Phil Prynne, Continence Advisor,  
West Berkshire PCT Consortium.  
7. 15 p.m. for 7. 30 p.m. at St Joseph's hall.

Thursday 4th September. **AGM.**  
7. 15 p.m. for 7. 30 p.m. at Newbury Mencap.

Thursday 4th December. **Open meeting.**  
1. 45 p.m. for 2. p.m. at St Joseph's hall.

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