



WBNA hosted its fourth neurology conference, *Brains, Pains and Gains*, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009. The subject of pain brought together over 120 patients, carers and professionals to listen to eleven speakers describe the many types of pain that can affect patients, and how the body responds to a very wide array of treatment options. *Brains, Pains and Gains* was held at a new conference venue, Arlington Arts, in the grounds of Mary Hare School. The facilities and food were excellent, making it the best conference venue we have used. Overall the day was a huge success and the feedback from the delegates' evaluation very positive.

In the morning delegates learned some of the basic facts about pain from consultant,

Dr Stephen Allen. Every person will experience acute pain at some time in their lives with one in seven of us experiencing chronic or long-term pain. In a fascinating presentation, Dr Allen described different types of pain and the neural pathways involved. He then elaborated on how painkilling drugs can target pain. However, his view was that pain pharmacy is not the complete answer and exercise and mobility and several alternative therapies can contribute significantly in pain management.

Dr Mark Ritchie, a Swansea GP with a special interest in pain management, emphasised how the patient has a key role in managing their own pain. Anxiety, depression and psychological management all impact on pain and early holistic treatment should prevent a spiral of deterioration. Dr Ritchie recommended

completing a Brief Pain Inventory (BPI) and keeping a pain diary for two weeks before a pain consultation. Further information on these documents can be found on the WBNA website: [www.wbna.org.uk](http://www.wbna.org.uk).

Paced exercise is usually very important and goals can include reducing dependency on aids, alcohol and drugs. Dr Ritchie is not against non-pharmaceutical approaches to pain management and favours a multi-disciplinary approach to managing pain.

Dr Hobro talked about the high cost of pain and how many patients are angry about their situation. She said pain can affect sleep and cause fatigue, sometimes leading to secondary illness, feelings of uselessness, anxiety, depression and reduced mobility.

Psychological therapy centres on understanding the person and assessing their cognitive, emotional and coping ability. She pointed out that positive thinking but positive activities are key success factors and results can take months to show up.

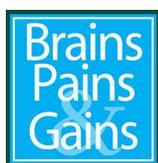
### WBNA Internet Pain Survey

The morning finished with a patient perspective from a fibromyalgia sufferer and WBNA member, Lindsey Middlemiss. After describing how chronic pain had terminated a promising career in competitive sailing, Lindsey presented some preliminary results from the WBNA Internet Pain Survey.

These revealed that over 60% of respondents were Not At All Satisfied or only Slightly Satisfied with how their pain is managed; nearly 77% hadn't experienced prompt and effective help from the NHS with managing their pain. Levels of awareness, ease of access and successfulness varied amongst services available. Lindsey pointed out that there is a lot that patients with chronic pain can do to help themselves, including: learning about

what services are available and how to access them; accessing complementary therapies; learning how to help their mental health; and learning techniques to help manage pain without outside assistance.

Our internet pain survey will continue until Monday September 7<sup>th</sup> 2009 when a final report will be prepared for presentation at the AGM. If you have not already done so, please complete this survey on pain and managing pain. It is simple and does not take long to complete. The results will help us to formulate Alliance policy on provision of local pain services. Just log on to [www.wbna.org.uk](http://www.wbna.org.uk) and click on the link.



With the combination of fine weather and the generosity of Arlington Arts, during the lunch break groups of delegates were able to use the arts centre facilities and the extensive grounds to partake in 'taster sessions' of some complementary therapies such as: Taijiquan, Myofascial Release and Hypnotherapy/ Relaxation. Delegates clearly enjoyed these sessions and wrote appreciative comments in the evaluation.

The afternoon session was taken up with specialist topics on the impact pain has on patients with long-term neurological conditions, such as brain injury, MS (Professor Christine Collins), Spinal Injury (Dr Henrietta Ellis) and Parkinson's Disease (Professor Ralph Gregory). Finally Dr Katy Vincent, a young researcher from Oxford University, presented the *Hilary Hinchliffe Lecture on How the Brain Perceives Pain*. Using images obtained from brain scans she reviewed evidence that pain modulatory mechanisms are altered in patients who suffer from chronic pain conditions. She pointed out the exciting possibility that in future brain studies could be used to: help

with drug development; identify an individual's "pain signature" and so tailor treatment to the individual as well as predict those individuals at risk of developing pain.

WBNA is indebted to Dr Steven Allen, Professor Christine Collin and Penny Lilley for their advice in planning *Brains, Pains and Gains* and making it such a success. We also thank Berkshire West NHS, Greenham Common Trust, Newbury Town Council, The British Polio Fellowship and the BG Group for sponsoring the event. Finally we are most grateful to all those volunteers who helped make the day run so smoothly.

## WBNA is 10 Years Old

WBNA was founded in 1999 and will be holding its 10<sup>th</sup> AGM on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September at 7.00pm for 7.30pm at the Holiday Inn, Padworth. Our Guest Speaker will be the chairman of the PCT Professional Panel and local GP, Dr David Buckle. We will also hear the results of the WBNA Internet Pain Survey. Why not come and join us: to review what we have achieved and hope to achieve, also to enjoy some birthday cake and refreshments. New members for the committee are always welcome. RSVP using the enclosed form or email: [secretary@wbna.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wbna.org.uk).

## Diary dates for your diary

We will be making a charity collection at Newbury Racecourse on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September after the evening's last race. Volunteers to shake collection tins are welcome. Our last meeting of 2009 will be on November 12<sup>th</sup> at St Joseph's Church Hall, Newbury, 1.45 for 2.00 pm.

## West Berkshire Neurological Alliance,

2, Clayhill Crescent, Newbury,  
Berks RG14 2NP

Tel: 01635 33582 Fax: 01635 569177

Email: [secretary@wbna.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wbna.org.uk)

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

Registered Charity No. 1081021