

Another Successful Conference



The Alliance hosted its 5th biennial conference 'New Opportunities for Neuro' on October 4th at Arlington Arts. It was an exhilarating day with an audience of about 100 learning about the exciting possibilities from emerging technologies, new opportunities for neuro-rehab, prevention and self-help assistive technologies. The second Hilary Hinchliffe lecture on 'New Approaches to Stem Cell Therapy' by Dr Steven Ray was especially appreciated as it opened up new horizons for future treatment of long-term conditions. We are delighted to report that overall the programme was rated above average by 96% of the delegates, with 93% scoring it very valuable in its usefulness. Our thanks go to all the speakers who informed and entertained. We also thank Professor Christine Collin and Dr Faraz Jeedi for helping us put together such a fascinating programme.

Minimum Standards for Rehab

South Central Strategic Health Authority (SHA) has initiated a project to develop minimum standards for neuro-rehab across the region. The Alliance hosted a Focus Group on behalf of the four Alliances in the South Central and we are in the process of writing up the findings, all to ensure strong voluntary sector input into the project. That the NHS is tackling the patchy nature of neuro-rehab services in the area is most

welcome, assuming that some minimum standards can be agreed.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Following a lull, the PCT programme to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for neuro-conditions is under way again. The PCT has held some consultations with both patients and the voluntary sector, all helpful in ensuring that any recommendations should be based on outcomes of value to patients. We trust that adequate time will be given for patients to comment on drafts before these recommendations are finalised.

Southern Regional Alliances

The Alliance met with representatives of the nine other Neuro Alliances in the South of England in October. Most other groups are relatively young and growing but we can, and do, all learn from each other. The joint alliances have arranged a meeting in January with the CEO of NHS South of England. One of our aims is to encourage the return of much needed regional clinical networks, to ensure there is better co-ordination of service developments.

Hydrotherapy and Gym Project

The West Berkshire Therapy Centre project has once again hit a delay. Just as the Board received news that access to the proposed plot of land had been sorted, it was discovered that so many great crested newts have invaded this plot that development there is impossible. So the hunt for an alternative is quickly under way, although few 'affordable' plots are thought to exist. This comes at a time when everything else about the project had

been building well. We trust to have better news in the next edition!

WBNA AGM

The 12th WBNA Annual General Meeting was held in September. The chairman reported on the mixed fortunes of the previous 12 months, with the closure of local day centres providing the grim reality of the effects of recession and spending cuts. He also commented on the hard-hitting report from the Royal College of Physicians and the Association of British Neurologists which concluded that, overall, services for patients with neurological conditions are poorly organised and do not meet patients' needs. The message is that we still have a great deal to do. During the evening members of the committee reviewed what had been achieved during the year and what we plan to do in 2012. Please read the full report at www.wbna.org.uk.

Focus Group on Wheelchair Services

In September the Alliance hosted a Focus Group on Services for Wheelchair Users.

It came up with a number of recommendations including:

- Administrative cover in the Wheelchair Service needs to be increased
- Appointments system needs to be reviewed to improve attendance rates.
- It would help if centres carried stock samples for use during assessments
- The service should carry some additional seating stock
- Spare parts carried by service teams need to be kept to more appropriate levels than has been the case
- Maintenance engineers should routinely offer advice on life expectancy of equipment
- Space should be provided on the Wheelchair Service web page for

clients to report the satisfaction with seating services provided

- Proposals to offer clients a choice of three approved service providers warrants commissioners consulting users, to ensure contracts are fit for purpose and minimum standards for wheelchair provision and service are being met.

Going Electronic

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Dates for your diary

Our next open meeting will be on January 12th 2012, the speaker will be Nigel Owen from WBC Community Services. He will describe the proposed changes in Care and Support Services in West Berkshire. Further dates for Meetings are March 8th, May 10th, July 12th, September 13th (AGM) and November 8th. All meetings, except the AGM, are held at St Joseph's Church Hall, Newbury, 1.45 for 2.00 pm. Please come along and join us.

Seasonal Greetings

At the end of a very busy and successful year, West Berkshire Neurological Alliance would like to thank all supporters, friends and colleagues and wish you all a Happy Christmas and healthy, prosperous 2012.

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