

***SOUTH WEST NEWS***

19th February 2021



Dear All,

I expect that many of you will have had your first vaccine by now. I hope that it will prove to be the path to a safer environment for everybody and that we may be holding meetings again later this year. While we wait we are getting a good dose of Island winter weather. It has brought some Egyptian Geese to the lake near me. I'm afraid I have no photo yet as thus far they haven't been close enough. I do however have a splendid picture of a kingfisher sent in by Jan Hill from Poole Branch.



My thanks to Jan Hill , Chris Wadsworth, Sally Bundock and Peter Sykes for contributions to this edition.

Best wishes,

Paul

DOES YOUR BRANCH HAVE A FACEBOOK PAGE?

Are you interested in developing a page for your branch and not sure how to take it forward? We are here to help!

Following the success of our own Facebook page development, we are keen to help you get more out of your own Facebook page. To start things off, our head of comms Lucia will be hosting a special Zoom event to go through some basics and hear your thoughts.

Aimed mainly at branch committee members but open to all, the event will look at things like "what can a Facebook page do for my branch?", "how can I use social media to attract more branch members?", "can a Facebook page be an effective communications method for branches?" and "how can we work with the Fellowship centrally more closely?"

To register, please respond to the Facebook event on the NHSRF Facebook Page or you can email Lucia directly at comms@nhsrf.org.uk. You can also email Lucia with any questions you have or areas you would like to see covered.

The meeting will be held via Zoom.



CHRIS WADSWORTH WRITES

To our frontline nurses and doctors.

Thank you and well done!

Such feeble, almost disparaging words when you are going through so much that defies description.

I have seen TV footage, heart breaking scenes and heartbroken nurses.

Despair and fear, tenacity and compassion. I have heard of the astonishingly long hours worked, the exhaustion and the shredded emotions. A relentless fight for each and every patient in your care. Harrowing and brave.

There isn't a day goes by I don't think of you and wonder how you get through, how you cope? Such immeasurable courage and focus.

And who cares for you? Is there someone wanting you home, wanting you safe?

With spring close and distressing times coming to an end, I hope you find a new beginning for yourselves, with hope restored, restful sleep and good dreams, waking with the confidence of a promising day, not anxiety for the shift ahead. I hope you give yourselves time, time to mend, time with your family, time to be happy.

And when your thoughts turn back to dark times, I hope you remember those whose lives you saved, those whose families can't thank you enough, and don't dwell too long on those whose lives you couldn't save, those too ill to recover. There was nothing left you could have done.

I'm grateful you are in our lives, we are lucky to have you.

Chris Wadsworth



A STORY FROM PETER SYKES

The lady looked distinctly out of place. She was about 70 years of age and was wearing a hand knitted floral cardigan, a heavy tweed skirt, a pair of thick woolen socks and walking boots. I thought that she would have looked more at home attending a village craft fair on a Saturday afternoon, than a city centre casualty department in the small hours of the morning. She had a large wicker basket covered with a tea towel on her lap, looked embarrassed and sounded apologetic.

'The truth is there's nothing the matter with me,' she admitted. 'It's Kitty, she's pregnant and she doesn't seem able to deliver her kittens.'

Gently she took the tea towel from the basket and revealed a large, but distinctly unhappy looking cat, which was lying on a pad of heavily bloodstained cotton wool. The cat mewed in a weak and pitiful way as she stroked it lovingly.

'Look,' I said defensively. 'I'm not a vet. I don't know anything about cats.'

'I know you're not a vet,' she said softly, 'but you've studied medicine; you must have some ideas.' It was obvious that she was genuinely concerned about her cat and was pleading for some assistance.

'I'm sorry,' I said, 'I really don't know anything about cats. When I was a lad at home, I had a couple of white mice and a budgerigar. There was a time when my Father kept chickens in the back garden, but we never had a cat or a dog.'

With tears now rolling down her cheeks, she reached for my hand and pleaded. 'But you will look at her for me, won't you, Doctor? She's so weak and lethargic now and she has lost such a lot of blood. I'm afraid that she's going to die.'

I recognised that I was out of my depth so I took Miss Mullins, for that was her name, to the office hoping that someone else might be able to advise.

Bill Makin, the medical registrar was there, together with the casualty sister. They were chatting with a couple of ambulance men, who were enjoying a break whilst waiting for their next call.

'Does anybody know anything about pregnant cats?' I asked and immediately George, one of the ambulance drivers, a rotund, ruddy-faced man in his fifties, expressed interest.

'Yes, I do. I've kept cats for years. I breed them its a hobby of mine.'

Quickly George took a concise clinical history from Miss Mullins that would have done credit to any medical practitioner.

He took a look at the abdomen and confirmed that she was indeed in labour. He then voiced concern that this had lasted significantly longer than the three hours that was normal for a cat, adding that the bleeding was much heavier than he had previously witnessed.

'For some reason the kittens are not coming through as they should,' he said. 'I really think this cat ought to be seen by a vet.'

'Or by an obstetrician,' Bill Makin remarked. 'I've already been on the telephone to St Margaret's Maternity Hospital earlier this evening about one of our cases. My old pal, David Winterbourne is on duty there. We'll send Kitty there. He's sure to know what to do. I'll give him a ring.'



Bill Makin reached for the phone and rang his friend. The casualty staff were able to hear one end of the conversation.

'I'm sorry to trouble you twice in one evening David,' he said, 'but I'm afraid that I have another patient here. She's pregnant for the first time and I need your advice. It's a bit complex. As you know, I'm not an expert in obstetrical matters but I have a sneaking suspicion that this may be a multiple pregnancy. She's in labour and she's started to bleed quite heavily. She's in a lot of pain and really doesn't look at all well. I would be grateful if you would take a look at her.'

There was a pause but those in the office could imagine what was being said at the other end of the line, even though they couldn't actually hear it.

'No, she's not one of your patients.'

Another pause.

'I'm afraid that she's had no antenatal care whatsoever. This is the first time anybody has realised that she's pregnant. I think that she's been a little secretive about it.'

There was a longer pause. 'Yes, I know. Some people blame the schools, others blame the government but personally I think poor parenting has a lot to do with it. There is no shortage of contraceptive advice available these days, is there? Mind you, I don't think she's the most intelligent of patients. I suspect that she's the sort that just can't say 'no.'

Another pause, shorter this time.

'No, I haven't remonstrated with her; I'll leave that to you. But I think I should warn you, she's a bit woolly headed. I very much doubt that she will understand. Her mother is with her though. She seems quite sensible and may be able to keep an eye on things in the future.'

Another pause.

'Look, David, I'm a chest physician. Anything below the belt is a 'no go' area for me. In my speciality, we don't go delving or diving into deep dark holes. I wouldn't know where to find the cervix, let alone say whether it was dilated.'

Another pause.

'OK and thanks for agreeing to take her. She's called Kitty by the way. I'm not sure what her surname is. She will be coming by ambulance and I'll have her with you within twenty minutes. Thanks David. It's very good of you.'

Bill smiled as he continued to listen.

'Yes, fair enough. I owe you one. I'll buy you a drink next time we meet. Good night and thanks again.'

He turned to face the group who had been listening intently to the telephone conversation. Everyone realised that he had failed to inform his friend that the patient was a cat.

'David says he's sick and tired of silly young girls who get themselves pregnant and then are so ashamed that they hide themselves away, thinking that they can cope all on their own. When he's sorted Kitty out, he intends to give her a good telling off.'

He turned to the ambulance men.

'Are you sure you're able to take Kitty to St Margaret's? I wouldn't want you to get into any trouble.'

"Of course we're sure," said George. 'Nobody at Ambulance Control is going to know anything about it, because it's not going to get recorded in our log. We'll have her there in two ticks.'



Work in the casualty department continued but two hours later Miss Mullins was back. Carrying her basket with great care, she had made the return journey from St Margaret's, albeit this time on foot. She looked overjoyed, beaming from ear to ear, bursting to tell what had happened.

'I just had to let you see.'

Gently, she placed the basket on a chair, then lifted a corner of the towel and showed everyone her beloved cat. Kitty was now lying contentedly in the basket, tenderly licking three tiny balls of fur that were snuggled up to her belly, their eyes closed.

'This is from the doctor at St Margaret's. He was just as kind as you were.'

Sister opened the envelope.

'Dear Casualty Staff,' it read. 'You were quite right. This was indeed a multiple pregnancy; triplets in fact. But all has turned out well. As you see, mother and babies are all fine despite the lack of antenatal care. To avoid further problems, I have taken the liberty of giving Kitty's 'mother' some contraceptive advice. Kind regards,
David.'

Peter Sykes latest book 'All in a Doctor's Day' – a collection of lively short stories all with a medical theme -- has recently been published. ALL proceeds to his local Hospice. <http://www.petersykes.org/contact.php>.



*'No, not a disco. This is a
24-hour vaccination site
for the elderly'*

With thanks to Sally Bundock for this cartoon.

MIRTHY TALK – MORECAMBE AND WISE

To register for this talk please visit www.mirthy.co.uk/NHSRF. . Steve Short brings to life the story of how a young Eric Morecambe met a young Ernie Wise with photos and clips. Steve tells his audience the journey they had to become Britain's best ever double act. In a partnership that lasted from 1941 until 1984, Eric and Ernie were regarded as Britain's best loved double act. Their career together began when they were booked separately to appear on the Jack Hylton revue 'Youth Takes a Bow'. From then on Eric and Ernie appeared in a series of shows over the next 20-years. The duo also starred in four feature films. In 1976 Eric and Ernie were both awarded the OBE. This entertaining presentation will bring back many memories of a much loved comedy partnership.



HOW TO GIVE A CAT A PILL

1. Pick up cat and cradle it in the crook of your left arm as if holding a baby. Position right forefinger and thumb on either side of cat's mouth and gently apply pressure to cheeks while holding pill in right hand. As cat opens mouth, pop pill into mouth. Allow cat to close mouth and swallow.
2. Retrieve pill from floor and cat from behind sofa. Cradle cat in left arm and repeat process.
3. Retrieve cat from bedroom and throw soggy pill away.
4. Take new pill from foil wrap, cradle cat in left arm, holding rear paws tightly with left hand. Force jaws open and push pill to back of mouth with right forefinger. Hold mouth shut for a count of ten.
5. Retrieve pill from goldfish bowl and cat from top of wardrobe. Call spouse from garden.
6. Kneel on floor with cat wedged firmly between knees, hold front and rear paws. Ignore low growls emitted by cat. Get spouse to hold head firmly with one hand while forcing wooden ruler into mouth. Drop pill down ruler and rub cat's throat vigorously.
7. Retrieve cat from curtain rail, get another pill from foil wrap. Make note to buy new ruler and repair curtains. Carefully sweep shattered figurines and vases from hearth and set to one side for gluing later.
8. Wrap cat in large towel and get spouse to lie on cat with head just visible from below armpit. Put pill in end of drinking straw, force mouth open with pencil, and blow down drinking straw.
9. Check label to make sure pill not harmful to humans, drink 1 beer to take taste away. Apply Band-Aid to spouse's forearm and remove blood from carpet with cold water and soap.
10. Retrieve cat from neighbour's shed. Get another pill. Open another beer. Place cat in cupboard, and close door onto neck, to leave head showing. Force mouth open with dessert spoon. Flick pill down throat with elastic band.
11. Fetch screwdriver from garage and put cupboard door back on hinges. Drink beer. Fetch bottle of Scotch. Pour shot, drink. Apply cold compress to cheek and check records for date of last tetanus shot. Apply whiskey compress to cheek to disinfect. Toss back another shot. Throw T-shirt away and fetch new one from bedroom.
12. Call fire department to retrieve the damn cat from tree across the road. Apologize to neighbour who crashed into fence while swerving to avoid cat. Take last pill from foil-wrap.
13. Tie the little @!!@#@#\$%'s front paws to rear paws with garden twine and bind tightly to leg of dining table, find heavy-duty pruning gloves from shed. Push pill into mouth followed by large piece of steak fillet. Be rough about it. Hold head vertically and pour 2 pints of water down throat to wash pill down.
14. Consume remainder of Scotch. Get spouse to drive you to the emergency room, sit quietly while doctor stitches fingers and forearm and remove pill remnants from right eye. Call furniture shop on way home to order new table.
15. Arrange for RSPCA to collect mutant cat from hell and call local pet shop to see if they have any hamsters.

HOW TO GIVE A DOG A PILL

1. Wrap the pill in cheese – toss in the general direction of the dog and carry on with life.

As ever I welcome any feedback or suggestions and would love some contributions – current or from your archives.

Best wishes,

Paul