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Dear All

What's New

As we move into 2022 many of us are becoming actively involved in the forthcoming P60 initiative to increase member numbers. Here in the South East/East Anglia we have half the Fellowship Branches and there is a lot of work to be done by our hardworking Branch Secretaries, Regional Reps and myself in ensuring the timely return of the branch questionnaires to Central Office. These are vital as they provide valuable information for the Call Centre working with us and will ensure that those who respond to our invitation to join us are directed to the best branch for them. Of course, there will be many who will choose to join as postal members and there will be those whose names will be recorded on lists for the area where they live so that new branches can be formed.

As you may know there are 25 branches in the Greater London area. Many of these have lost their hospital meeting rooms. Some have been fortunate to find new premises whilst some are still seeking somewhere to meet. Many branches across the 3 countries have experienced similar loss of premises. We hope that soon many will be allowed back in to their hospital rooms. It is heartening to hear how hard branches are working to keep together and to move forward.

On a different note I would like to make everyone aware that the Civil Service Insurance Society have today informed me that they are now able to offer car insurance to drivers up to the age of 89. This may be of interest to some of you.

Update on Live Talks

We have some really great talks lined up for the next few weeks so why not join in. They are all on a Tuesday and will commence at 11.30am. You do not need to register in advance for the talk. Just go to www.mirthy.co.uk/NHSRF and click the purple 'Join Event' button underneath the talk in question at 11.25am. Clear instructions are on the website. Please contact me if in any doubt. Remember these talks could be used when they are first shown and for up to 7 days for a branch meeting provided the room used has the necessary equipment. Details of the next 3 talks are shown on page 8 of this newsletter. They are:

22 February	Chloroform – Sense and Insensibility – Sun Jester
8 March	Celebrating Women in History – Annie Garthwaite
22 March	The Thefts of the Mona Lisa – Dr. Noah Charney



Tony Moffat

Cannabis Menace or Medicine?

Steve Greaves reports on Prof. Tony Moffat's interesting talk (Cambridge Branch)

There is an urban myth you may well have heard.

It goes like this: "I don't know why the government does not legalise cannabis, it does some good and doesn't do any harm."

As myths go this one could not be further from the truth: cannabis *is* dangerous, so dangerous in fact that under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 people found producing it or holding it in large quantities face up to five years in prison and unlimited fines.

Taken in sufficient quantity it can severely impact on physical and mental capabilities as witnessed by a court case recently reported in the national press which saw a man acquitted of murder because he was so under the influence of cannabis that he lost all reason and was unable to distinguish what was right or wrong, or even remember what he had done.

Although there has been a steady increase in the use of cannabis for personal recreation and the gradual relaxation of laws surrounding it, it is still classed as a Class B drug which makes it illegal to farm, sell for profit or be in possession of it, but recently there has been a steady movement to make cannabis possession for personal use less of a criminal act.

An Act of Parliament passed in November 2018 allowed the use of cannabis for medicinal use only. Using it for recreation purposes is still illegal, although some police chief constables have gone so far as to tell their officers not to prosecute citizens caught in possession of it.

Using cannabis, sometimes known as 'weed' or 'grass', produces a brief sense of euphoria, but can also lead to increased heart rate, lowering of blood pressure, toxic psychosis, panic attacks and paranoia, in some cases even engendering thoughts of suicide. There is also a lesser-known downside to taking this drug: passive inhalation which can cause unexpected – and sometimes amusing – results on those unfortunate enough to be sitting close to someone puffing away on a reefer, particularly in a 'brown café' in the side streets of Amsterdam when very often more than just coffee is on the menu.

Official surveys have found that cannabis is less harmful than alcohol abuse or tobacco, but the effects of it are considered so serious that certain sections of society are banned by law from using it.

These bans are intended to stop the drug being taken by members of the armed forces, official transport drivers such as bus, train and coaches and sportsmen among others.

The number of deaths from cannabis abuse is low compared to other drugs of abuse and was reported as being 31 in one survey taken in 2014 from a death toll of 3,346 that year.

This information and much more was imparted to Cambridge Branch members by Professor Tony Moffat, during a talk on "*Cannabis: menace or medicine.*"

Despite the known downside of taking cannabis the farming of it continues to rise and those who produce it continue to find more and more ingenious ways of growing it.

For instance, one laboratory was detected and closed down after a lengthy period of production in a former police station in Failsworth, Greater Manchester. What cheek, carrying out an illegal activity in a law enforcement building!

Another example of this ingenuity concerned a hemp shop keeper in Glastonbury who surreptitiously planted some cannabis seeds in hanging baskets and flower tubs provided by the local council then sat back and watched them water his cannabis plants until it was time for him to harvest them.

There is another example of how people make a profit from cannabis in Colorado, USA where some shops are now licensed to produce and sell cannabis. In one case the trader makes money from over the counter sales and the state makes money from taxes and licensing fees.

Another group who makes money from the sale of this drug is a Denver troop of girl guides.

Wait!!

What was that?

One effect of using cannabis is to increase the appetite among users which is known as a case of 'having the munchies' which is where the girl guides come in: they are making money for their group by setting up a confectionary stall outside or nearby to sell brownies to hungry customers.

Well done girls. Entrepreneurs in the making.

So much for the downside of using cannabis. What about the upside?

The use of this drug is believed to ease muscle spasms, menstrual pains, rheumatism, convulsions, rabies and epilepsy.



One famous user of cannabis to ease discomfort was Queen Victoria who used it to relieve her period pains.

Other therapeutic benefits are said to include the easing of bronchial asthma, glaucoma, hypertension, muscle spasticity, pain, anorexia, nausea and vomiting.

Cannabis is a prescribed drug used with positive effects for some people, but there are increasing pressures on the government to de-criminalise its recreational use. The number of prescriptions is actually quite low and in 2019 only 18 NHS prescriptions were issued from a total of 277 prescriptions written.

So why not continue the gradual de-criminalisation of cannabis use and legalise it?

Well, the simple answer is that cannabis-based medicines by and large do not work.

Prof Moffat took part in a one million pound trial by Dr John Zajicek at Derriford Hospital in Plymouth in 2003, when 600-plus patients took part in a 16-week oral trial which saw 220 of them issued with capsules which contained extracts of cannabis, 220 which contained Marinol (a man-made form of cannabis normally used to treat anorexia and to stop nausea and vomiting in cancer patients) and 220 given capsules that contained absolutely nothing of medical substance: a placebo.

The results showed that some people reported lessening of pain and others no effect at all, but more than 30% of the people who took the placebo said they had felt better having taken it!

Taking cannabis may alleviate pain and lead to some feelings of happiness and short-term euphoria, but according to Prof Moffat the same effects can be achieved with a large G and T.

Now that is something we can drink to! Cheers!

Steve Greaves

One last thing





Five Mile Films have begun their search for individuals, friends, couples and families who could offer a rescue dog a loving home and share their story with them as part of their next series. If you would be interested in this they would love to hear from you.

The Dog House is set at the animal charity Wood Green in Cambridgeshire and has been described as both 'charming' and 'compassionate'. The programme follows prospective owners as they are matched with a rescue dog, specially selected by the expert team of matchmakers at Wood Green. In previous series they have found there are many reasons that people might wish to bring a dog into their lives; loneliness, extra company for a child, to encourage exercise or to live in the moment more! They tell the story of both humans and dogs, as they prepare to meet each other for the first time.

If you are interested in being a dog-rescuer why not make contact with them. Their website is shown on the flyer on the left.

The first apple.. 🍏

A woman ran a red traffic light and crashed into a man's car. Both of their cars are demolished, but amazingly neither of them was hurt.

After they crawled out of their cars, the woman said; "Wow, just look at our cars! There's nothing left, but fortunately we are unhurt. This must be a sign from God that we should meet and be friends and live together in peace for the rest of our days."

The man replied, "I agree with you completely. This must be a sign from God!"

The woman continued, "And look at this, here's another miracle. My car is completely demolished, but my bottle of 75 year old scotch didn't break. Surely God meant for us to drink this vintage delicacy and celebrate our good fortune." Then she handed the bottle to the man.

The man nods his head in agreement, opened it, drank half the bottle and then handed it back to the woman. The woman took the bottle, immediately put the cap back on, and handed it back to the man.

The man asks, "Aren't you having any?"

She replies, "Nah. I think I'll just wait for the Police."

Many years ago, Adam ate the apple.

Men will never learn!.....

My thanks to Monica Sado for sending in this funny. Hope the 'boys' are not offended!



Caister Men Never Turn Back

A Talk by Don Hill

(Possible speaker for a branch meeting)

Don Hill is a speaker who talks on the subject of "Caister men never turn back" which gives the history recorded from 1791 to the present day of the Caister Lifeboat. The beachmen used sailing and pulling (rowing) lifeboats during the Victorian and Edwardian years following by petrol engines until about 30 years ago which saw the introduction of water-jet propulsion and unsinkable craft (think of a lifeboat needing no propeller or rudder!). His talk includes information on 3 of his heroes, James Haylett, John Woodhouse, and David Stogden.

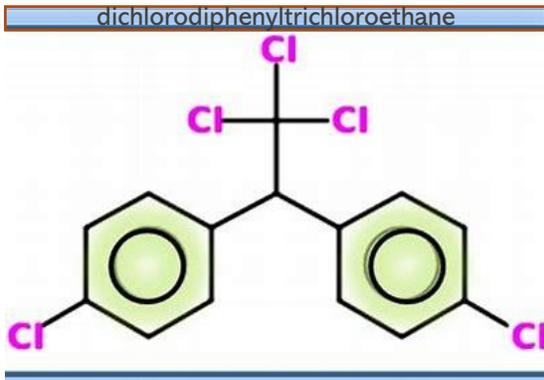
Don is willing to travel to any area from Peterborough down to Chelmsford. He does not charge expenses as he is happy to bear them himself which is a sign of his own commitment. He does, however, accept donations to the lifeboat service. Don is based in Wisbech and has given talks to the NHSRF branch there. He has also given a talk to our Chelmsford Branch. In the event of a planned speaker becoming ill, he could possibly fit in at short notice. His landline number is 01284, 768717 with email being donruth@outlook.com

The Great London Smog 1952



Channel 5 are currently putting together a documentary about the Great London Smog of 1952. They are interested to hear from anyone working in the NHS at the time. I guess individuals would need now to be well into their 80s.

If you or anyone you know is able to help Channel 5 with this piece of work, please contact Hermoine Hellyer at Hermione.Hellyer@dsp.tv or call 07927 209956.



The Magic White Powder

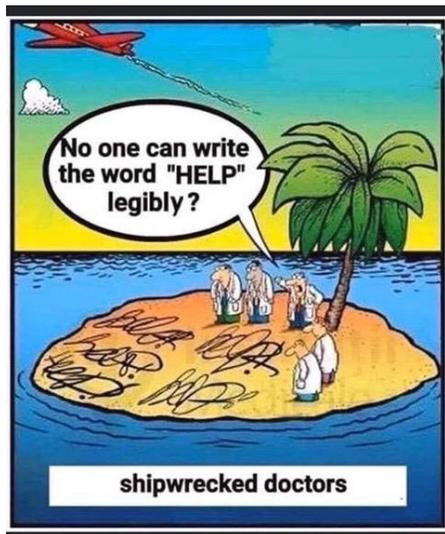
Sir James Beament

With kind permission of S.K. Goolamali MD who edited and compiled 'Twice Daily After Meals' A selection of the Wit and Wisdom of the Celebrated.

I graduated in the middle of World War II and was directed to the London School of Tropical Medicine to work on disease-carrying insects and, in particular, lice. In World War I millions of people died from typhus, transmitted by the louse. The only insecticides we had were derris and pyrethrum which came from overseas. My task was to discover why so many possible pesticides would not go through insect skin. And then there appeared a magic white powder. Rumour was it was smuggled in from Switzerland. It was lethal to insects in minute amounts. It didn't appear to affect people. Could it be used against the louse?

But lice will only feed on humans and we needed a huge supply for testing. There was only one answer. We had to feed them on ourselves. About a hundred were put in a little aluminum tin with a gauze through which they could pierce our skin and suck blood. They needed to feed for 16 hours a day. So they went everywhere with us: ten boxes in a rather inefficient stocking, one day on one leg, one day on the other. They were always falling out when one ran for a train. And I shall never forget discovering at a No. 73 bus stop that half of them had disappeared while I was at a concert at the Royal Albert Hall. Luckily they were traced back to the School, for it could have caused a germ warfare scare. Nor surprisingly, it was difficult to keep a girlfriend too.

Our field trials were simple. We 'obtained' elderly vagrants from under Hungerford Bridge, gave them a meal and an army shirt impregnated with the powder, and collected them again a week later. They were happy. All their lice were dead – and they could keep the shirt. In the winter of 1944, typhus erupted in Naples. And as the official Report said 'we rounded up the entire population and blew the dust down the collars and up the trouser legs of the males, and the females 'mutatis mutandis'. It was the first time in history that a typhus epidemic was crushed. The magic white powder was of course DDT. And my legacy of the war is a remarkable collection of skin allergies. Fortunately, the chance of my being bitten by a louse these days is small.



A Grandson's Lament

Chris McCrudden West Middx., Hounslow & Spelthorne Branch



My grandma's not a proper grandma
She does wear spex that's true.
But she has a Nirvana teeshirt,
And she paints her toenails blue!

My grandma's not a proper grandma,
She won't let her hair go grey.
She says I've always been a blonde,
And that's the way I'll stay.

My grandma's not a proper grandma
She doesn't like Strictly Dancing,
And grumbles at the telly saying
Can't stand that silly prancing



A visit to Battersea Park

Tuesday, 15th March

The Royal Marsden Group are planning a visit to Battersea Park in March. Following the stroll around the park, they plan to visit the café, overlooking the lake, to enjoy some refreshments. The branch would be happy to welcome members from other branches and postal members to this event. If you would like to take part please contact Susan Gunning at RMH@nhsrf.org.uk for more information.

If your branch would like to share an event will fellow members please contact me at london.eastanglia@nhsrf.org.uk. Thanks. Ed

Help Save the Planet

On reading my emails earlier this month, I found a message from Chris McCrudden, West Middx., Hounslow and Spelthorne Branch which read *'Do you think most of our members now know that we can recycle the blister packs that most tablets come in? Unfortunately, only Superdrug seem to do this at the moment, but it is another way of helping the planet.'* Well done Chris for mentioning this as I did not know it and will now make use of the Superdrug recycling facility in our local high street.

Chris's email reminded me of all the things we can all do to help to save the planet for future generations. I have typed in just a few below.

Buy loose fruit and vegetables and take our own cloth bags to put them in.

Choose products in cardboard boxes or tins rather than plastic containers.

Recycle any and all plastic packaging; check before you buy that it can be recycled.

Don't pick up disposable plastic cutlery when you buy fast food. Take your own stainless-steel spoons, knives and forks.

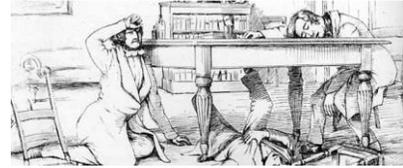


Every little helps and the time to act is now.

Ed

Next On-line Talk – 22 February

Chloroform – Sense and Insensibility Sun Jester



Horror and humour combine to explore how early doctors and scientists experimented with anaesthesia, often on themselves or their family and friends. The quest to transform surgery from a terrifying ordeal to pain-free experience resulted in alarming degrees of both bravery and recklessness.

And on the 8 March

Celebrating Women in History Annie Garthwaite



As we celebrate International Women's Day and Women's History Month, author Annie Garthwaite brings us face to face with Cecily, 15th century matriarch of the House of York and one of England's great unsung dynasty builders. Born in the year of Agincourt, Cecily lived through 80 years of tumultuous history, led her family through civil war and saw two of her sons – Edward IV and Richard III – gain the throne. In her lifetime, she was one of the most powerful women in England, second only to queens. Reading from her novel, Annie will reveal Cecily in all her complex glory: A dynastic schemer and a political mover and shaker of the first rank; a strategist, politician and administrator par excellence. A woman of her time and for all time.

And on the 22 March

The Thefts of the Mona Lisa Dr Noah Charney



How well do you know the world's most famous painting? It was stolen in 1911 and rocketed to world stardom. But there is more to the story, including the implication of Pablo Picasso in the theft, a wild goose chase tricking the Nazis and a teacup wielding maniac attacking it. This talk will provide a deep look at the many fascinating stories behind Leonardo's Mona Lisa.

And finally, keep well everyone. If you would like to contribute to the next issue or you know of anyone who would like to be added to the mailing list or sent a hard copy then please do make contact via phone 07960 425956 or email london.eastanglia@nhsrf.org.uk

Sally Bundock Development Officer