

# **TAMAR AREA PROSTATE SUPPORT (TAPS)**

## **REPORT on 16th MEETING, 27 May 2020**

This meeting was held virtually using Zoom. Attendance was 7 men plus the Chair of the Cornwall group based in Truro.

Speaker: Sophie Smith, Specialist nurse PCUK

Topic: Erectile dysfunction, incontinence and sexual performance

Sophie suggested that she should talk around issues raised that afternoon by some of the members present. She was an enlightening speaker who told it as it is! As a result, we learnt a lot. My next two paragraphs precis what we covered and I apologise if they are too explicit for some. However it did seem to me that this was the sort of session that Support Groups should offer and that we should be open about.

The first topic was ED after surgery or RT. Both these treatments can cause damage to the nerves around the prostate gland which initiate erections. The result could be ED with or without feeling sexual desire. Partial damage can sometimes repair itself and here aids such as Viagra type medications can help but they do not work for all. Alternatives include vacuum pumps and injections which are a mechanical approach not linked to libido. It turns out that we should all have been advised after treatment to undertake penis rehab, perhaps using vacuum pumps, to have the best chance of getting erections in future. If someone has not had an erection for some time, the blood vessels atrophy and erections become increasingly less likely. Just another part of the body to look after – use or lose it! Lastly HT affects some men mentally in that libido diminishes or disappears due to reduction in testosterone levels. Once HT stops, libido should return. The good news was that orgasms are still possible without erections since the sensitivity of the penis head is not linked to the nerves around the prostate.

On incontinence at various levels, the first thing we should all be doing is pelvic floor exercises which strengthen the muscles holding the bladder and the sphincter around the urethra. I'm not sure we all advised to do this? If problems persist then there are several medicines that can be prescribed by our GPs but these are not effective for all of us. The end game is pads and pants. Further advice is available from PCUK.

As you can see, we had very frank discussions and our members were very good at coming forward with their personal problems and of course they were not alone with them. Rob from Truro thought it was a great session and he wished he could get such open talking in his group. Sue Boyes from PCUK said we were leading the way in having such an open session by Zoom. Maybe this is easier done in small groups but what are your views?

**Next session: Wed 24 June 2020 at 4.00pm by Zoom**

**Speaker: Di Chorlton, Macmillan Engagement Lead for SW**  
**Topic: Anything you would like – please let me know**

### **Other matters:**

#### **Tesco Bags of Help**

We have now received the expected £1167 for which we are very grateful.

**Prostate Cancer UK** awarded TAPS a grant of just over £800 expected shortly.

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