

TAMAR AREA PROSTATE SUPPORT (TAPS)

REPORT on 19th MEETING, 27 Jan 2021

This meeting was held virtually using Zoom. Invitations had been sent to other PSGs. Attendance was 36 of whom 7 were from TAPS.

Speaker: Andrew Gabriel

Topic: Living with and surviving Hormone Therapy

There are various types of hormone therapy (HT) but essentially they reduce testosterone levels which is the food for the growth of prostate cancer cells – no food stops or slows growth but does not remove the cells! The effect of HT is to reduce the size of the prostate, to improve the outcomes from low power radiotherapy, to improve life expectancy for incurable cancer and to put PCa on hold while waiting for treatment perhaps because of Covid.

Andrew concentrated on the possible side effects from HT and how to live or deal with them. He listed non-exhaustively 21 possible side effects – who knew (or was warned) that there could be so many! The most well known are hot flushes and night sweats, loss of libido and erectile problems, fatigue, swelling and tender breasts, loss of body hair, etc. Less well-known positive effects include loss of body odour, reversal of head hair balding, and possible but unproven reduced risk of Covid.

Most patients undergo a limited time on HT (normally max 3 years) and the side effects will then generally dissipate over the next 12 -18 months. Hot sweats are one of the last to go and may take even longer. Andrew took each of the main side effect areas in turn and gave some guide as to how to alleviate them, eg for hot sweats, strip off in layers, take iced drinks or just wait for them to stop - in about 2 mins!. For some there are physical aids and for others there are medical treatments. As ever one of the most effective methods is to take plenty of exercise and eat a sensible diet.

I have Andrew's slide pack for those that may be interested but they are not stand alone and you really need to have heard the talk to fully understand their context. He spoke for about 1.5 hours and it was a good interactive session.

Next session: Wed 24 Feb 2021 at 6.00pm by Zoom

Speaker: Sarah Gray, National Support Manager, Tackle Prostate Cancer

Topic: Working together to support people living with and beyond Prostate Cancer

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