



# WRSG Newsletter

WOLVERHAMPTON RHEUMATOLOGY SUPPORT GROUP

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CARING IS SHARING

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## Reminder

### Visit to the Houses of Parliament

The 40 places for the tour of the Houses of Parliament on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March are now taken. The cost of the coach fare is £13 with members providing their own food and drink as usual.

We will leave Falkland Street coach park at 9.30 a.m. and leave London at approximately 5.00 p.m.

There are still spare places in the coach if anyone just wishes to visit London.

To book a place ring Joyce between 4.00 and 6.00 p.m. please

**PLEASE NOTE – NO CAMERAS OR MOBILE PHONES CAN BE TAKEN INTO THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT**



## Reminder - Information Session

We are having an information session on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April at the Holly Bush, Penn Road Wolverhampton from 2.00 to 4.00 p.m.

The talk will be by members of the Falls Prevention Team. They will talk about the risks of falling, how to reduce the risks and how to cope after a fall. They will also bring along aids to help with everyday living and falls prevention.

The talk will be from 2.00 to 3.00 p.m. followed by afternoon tea, coffee and cakes. There will be no charge for this event.

The team also provide a Balance for Life programme, one day a week for four consecutive weeks which I am sure they will tell us about.

Booking forms are included with this newsletter.

### Outing to Bridgemere Garden Centre

Sheila is arranging a trip to Bridgemere Garden Centre on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May. The cost of the coach fare will be £5 per person. We leave Falkland Street Coach Station at 10.00 a.m and leave Bridgemere at 4.00 p.m. for the return journey.

To book a place ring Sheila between 4.30 and 6.30 only please

Liz says this is the right time to buy our plants!

#### Spring's ahead.

Good-bye, leggings.

Good-bye, snow.

Good-bye, winter.

Spring, hello!

Hello, crocus.

Hello, kite.

Good-bye, winter

Spring's in sight!

### Information Session

We have arranged an Information Session about the benefits system. on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> June, at the Holly Bush from 10.30 to 12.30 a.m. We will provide tea, coffee and cakes on arrival.

The talk will be given by Denise Pearson a Welfare Rights Officer working for Wolverhampton City Council. They are based at Heantun House, Salop Street Wolverhampton and undertake benefit advice and benefit take up campaigns for the Social Services department.

Members will be able to ask questions and there will be no charge for the event.

I was also asked to include advice on the Direct Payment Scheme but Denise says that is covered by a different department so maybe that will be one for the future.

Booking forms will be included with the May newsletter.

### HYDROTHERAPY

I now have a contact for the hydrotherapy at Penn Hall School. Richard Baker  
Physiotherapist at West Park Hospital  
01902 444060

### Orthotics

Many of our members attend the Orthotics Department at New Cross hospital.

We now have a new staff member.

I asked Nicola if she would introduce herself to us through the newsletter and she has kindly written the following article.

I am sure you will look forward to meeting her:-

“I have a strong background in social care, I have worked in a number of different roles in community and nursing care spanning a ten year period.

I began my career studying Psychology for 3 years at the University of Manchester, I then went on to graduate with a first class degree in Prosthetics and Orthotics from the University of Salford.

I have spent 6 months at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic hospital in Oswestry gaining experience in orthotics and in specialist orthotic treatment for children suffering from cerebral palsy and the muscular dystrophies, before starting as a full time Orthotist at New Cross hospital Wolverhampton.

I'm planning to start my PhD in September which will focus on the theory of the spinal engine and how it affects gait. Hopefully I will be able to link my research with orthotics design and provision.

Nicola”

### Medieval diets 'far more healthy'

If they managed to survive plague and pestilence, medieval humans may have enjoyed healthier lifestyles than their descendants today, it has been claimed.

Their low-fat, vegetable-rich diet - washed down by weak ale - was far better for the heart than today's starchy, processed foods, one GP says. And while they consumed more they burnt off calories in a workout of 12 hours' labour, Dr Roger Henderson concludes.

But the Shropshire GP accepts that life for even prosperous peasants was tough.

Their diet would have involved fish, fruit, whole grains and olive oil - as well as red wine - the rich often overindulged, while the poor may not always have been able to obtain them.

The average medieval peasant however would have eaten nearly two loaves of bread each day, and 8oz of meat or fish, the size of an average steak.

#### **MEDIEVAL LIFESTYLE**

Calories: 3,500 - 4,000

Nearly two loaves of bread

Three pints of ale

Up to 12 hours labour each day

This would have been accompanied by liberal quantities of vegetables, including beans, turnips and parsnips, and washed down by three pints of ale.

Crucially, there was little refined sugar in their food, while modern eating habits are dominated by biscuits, cake and sweets.

"If you put this together with the incredible work load, medieval man was at much less risk of coronary heart disease and diabetes than we are today," said Dr Henderson.

#### **MODERN LIFESTYLE**

Calories: 2,700

Fat intake exceeds recommendations

Less than 20 minutes exercise each day

Greater risk of heart disease and diabetes

However, he did acknowledge that people today did have one advantage over their ancestors when it came to staying alive.

"If you got to 30 in those days you were doing well, past 40 and you were distinctly long in the tooth," he concedes.

Anna Denny of the British Nutrition Foundation said: "This research highlights how much lifestyles have changed over the centuries.

"Today, the majority of adults in the UK are overweight or obese, but energy intakes have actually been decreasing for several decades."

Story from BBC NEWS:

#### **Living with Arthritis**

##### **Adjusting to pain**

Coping with persistent pain poses a real challenge to many people with arthritis. But sufferers do face it successfully, and manage to stop pain from interfering with their lifestyle.

##### **In this article – Making a pain plan**

The main treatments for arthritis are key parts of any strategy to fight pain. But there are other commonly used approaches. Here are some:

**Learning pain management** - Arthritis Care runs a Challenging Arthritis course that includes pain management. (Liz and Julie are hoping to put on a course in the autumn)

**Using a Transcutaneous Nerve Stimulation** device which transmits a low-level electrical impulse Some people find this helps reduce pain. You should consult your doctor or physiotherapist. (These TENS machines are available to buy or loan from the WRSG if you consult with Pat Jones on 01902 884495)

##### **Hypnosis**

If you think this might be useful, talk to your doctors. You'll need to be referred to someone who is professionally trained.

**Joining self-help groups** run by people with arthritis. You have already done this by joining the WRSG if you are reading our newsletter.

##### **Looking after your joints and conserving energy.**

Going to a pain clinic - if nothing else seems to help, doctors may refer you to a pain management clinic. These sometimes have teams of health professionals, who run programmes that help people cope with long-term pain and live active lives.

### **Making a pain plan**

Some people with arthritis try and break the pain cycle by putting together a pain management plan. This might include:

Notes on the best times to take medication  
Notes on when heat, cold and rest seem to help

Plans on when to take different types of exercise, and a reminder of what helps you feel relaxed

### **Adjusting your personal life**

Whatever your age, arthritis presents problems that can affect your personal life.

### **Adjusting as a young person**

Arthritis can present special problems for young people. All young people have fears to contend with as they grow up, but if you've arthritis, worries about future job prospects, family, relationships and disability can be especially intense. You may feel isolated and lose self-confidence. It's not unusual to react angrily to being different and even to refuse to follow the treatment doctors prescribe.

Doctors and those involved in the care of young people with arthritis have a real responsibility to make their patients feel involved in their treatment. There is little help directly aimed at young people with arthritis.

### **Adjusting if a member of your family has arthritis**

Those who live with or look after someone with arthritis have to get the right balance between being supportive and over-protective. It's easier to judge what to do if you try and learn as much as possible about the condition, and communicate well with the person who has arthritis. Having a child with arthritis poses special problems and can put enormous pressures on parents. All carers need to make sure that they look after themselves, and if you spend a lot of time looking after someone with arthritis, you may be entitled to support from your local Social Services Department. The Carers National Association and other arthritis organisations can also provide advice and support.

### **Adjusting personal relationships**

Like everyone else, people with arthritis can encounter problems in their sex lives. These can often be connected with the physical and psychological symptoms of arthritis.

Talking to your partner is a vital first step. But if the problems continue, your family doctor may be able to help, or refer you to other people who can, such as a trained sex therapist.

Alternatively, you could contact your local Family Planning Association or a marriage guidance counsellor (in the phone book under Marriage Guidance).

This article was last medically reviewed by Dr Rob Hicks in November 2005.

### **Health Conditions**

Weather is considered a possible influence on a wide variety of health conditions. In some cases, such as migraine headaches, weather may bring on an episode. In other cases, weather factors may make existing pain worse.

Here are some health conditions commonly associated with weather-influenced aches and pains:

### **Arthritis**

Arthritis is pain and stiffness in joints or connective tissues. Particular types include rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout and many others.

Several studies over the past 20 years have found no correlation between arthritis pain and weather conditions. One researcher, a Stanford psychologist, said that because people naturally look for patterns, subjects mistakenly associated their pain with weather conditions.

However, a study in 1960 at the University of Pennsylvania and a later Dutch experiment did find connections between increased arthritis pain and certain weather conditions.

Weather factors that may impact arthritis pain include dramatic changes in barometric pressure and humidity. Cold weather can increase stiffness in muscles and joints.

### Fibromyalgia

**Fibromyalgia Syndrome** (also called FMS) is a chronic condition of fatigue accompanied by pain and tenderness in muscles, tendons and other connective tissues. Fibromyalgia occurs mainly in women. Stress, activity level and weather are considered possible influences on the condition. A 1981 survey reported that more than 90% of fibromyalgia patients believed "cold and humid" weather, in particular, made them feel worse. Changes in barometric pressure may also affect those with FMS.

### Migraines

Migraines are headaches caused by constriction or dilation of the blood vessels in the brain. Pain generally occurs on one side of the face or head. Sufferers sometimes feel nausea and sensitivity to light or sound. Triggers include stress, hormonal fluctuations, certain types of food and weather.

According to research by the New England Centre for Headache, as many as half of all migraines are triggered by weather. Many migraine sufferers single out cold, dry weather as the culprit, though almost any weather change can be a problem. Some doctors suggest that patients keep a detailed headache journal, so they can anticipate weather changes and take preventative medication, if necessary.

### Sinus headaches

Sinuses are the air cavities in the bones around your nasal passages. When sinuses become clogged or infected, the resulting pressure can cause a headache. Symptoms include pain in the front of the head and around the eyes, yellow or green nasal discharge and perhaps a fever. It's believed that barometric pressure changes may bring on headaches, if the sinus cavities are slow to equalize air pressure. Damp, cold weather can intensify sinus pain.

A recent study suggests that most people who think they are suffering from sinus headaches may actually have migraines -- especially in cases where weather is an obvious trigger. Since symptoms of both types of headaches can vary, visit your doctor for a proper diagnosis.

### Multiple Sclerosis

**Multiple Sclerosis** (or MS) is a chronic neurological disease marked by loss of coordination or balance, blurred vision, slurred speech, extreme fatigue and a host of other problems. The symptoms, which can come and go unpredictably, result from a breakdown of the covering that protects nerve fibres in the central nervous system. Some people with MS report that their symptoms get worse in hot weather or when they become overheated. Cold weather may also cause discomfort in some MS patients.

### Raynaud's phenomenon

Raynaud's phenomenon is a condition in which blood vessel spasms disrupt blood circulation to the fingers or toes. The phenomenon which turns one or several digits pale or bluish can last minutes or hours, but generally does not cause tissue damage. Pain is uncommon, but there may be partial, temporary paralysis in the affected area. Emotional reactions and cold weather are two known triggers.

### Asthma

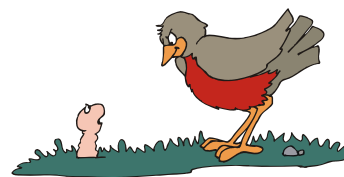
Asthma is breathing difficulty brought on by constriction of the lung's airway passages. Research has shown a correlation between cool, dry weather and increased asthma-related hospital admissions. Spring and summer can also bring on asthma attacks, because of increased pollen and pollution in the air. Wind is also a factor, since it can transport those irritants over long distances. Visit the [weather.com](http://www.weather.com) Allergies and Air Quality sections for pollen reports and pollution forecasts for your area.

### The North wind doth blow

The North wind doth blow and we shall have snow,

And what will poor robin do then, poor thing?

He'll sit in a barn and keep himself warm  
And hide his head under his wing, poor thing.



### **Making changes continued.....**

**In the last newsletter I told you of some of the changes I have made in my life. I have got used to most of them including whizzing up and down the stairs on my new stair lift. Some of the things I could have continued to manage without but why struggle if you don't need to.**

**I have attended the Falls Prevention Balance for Life programme on four consecutive Thursday mornings and learned quite a lot. The course is not all about falls.**

**On the advice of the Falls Prevention Service I received a visit from the Fire Service (Yes my very own Firemen!) They came to check my smoke alarm but they asked if I could hear without my hearing aids and when I said no they fitted a different type of smoke alarm. It has the usual smoke alarm fitted to the trap door on the landing but also has a small round pad which would vibrate under my pillow and wake me up in the event of a fire.**

**The firemen also work out an escape plan with you which I found quite scary and they pointed out that I shouldn't have a cordless phone in the bedroom because in the event of a power cut I couldn't dial for help. I have replaced that with one with a cord which is just plugged into the phone socket.**

**They also asked when my Living Flame fire was last serviced and I said four years ago because I don't use it much. My central heating is always on when it is cold. However I have now had it serviced by a man from the Age concern "Word of Mouth" list. See Page 7**

**If you would like to take advantage of this Free Home Fire Safety Check call 0800 389 5525 to arrange an appointment I intend to arrange an Information session by the fire service later in the year.**

**After having made the changes I decided to take stock of my home. I am quite happy with the bedrooms shared by Jack and my computer equipment and by Jessica and the industrial photocopier even if they are not.**

**I spend quite a lot of time in my bedroom. I have an ottoman which we bought when we got married in 1962 and is the only place from which I can reach my feet! It was looking a bit shabby and I had some matching material so I rang one of our members who is also my friend. (Actually I think of all of you as my friends else I wouldn't rabbit on like this). I asked if she would re-cover the ottoman and she has made a beautiful job of it.**

**This spurred me on to clear out my wardrobes. I wear clothes I have had for years but if I haven't worn anything for two years it has to go. All the rooms upstairs are now fine and I moved on to the hall, stairs and landing. Bill came to make good the decorating up the stairs from having the stair lift fitted. Another job well done!**

**The kitchen is functional and o.k.**

**So I began to think about my living room. I can cope with the high seats on the toilets and the stair lift and the office equipment but I do not want any of that encroaching into my living room.**

**I looked around and I realised I am living in a time warp. I have a through lounge which is divided by cedar sliding doors. The back is my sitting room and the front is the dining room and it is the dining room which is in the time warp. Time for change!**

**I decided I had too much furniture in there and something had to go. I got rid of my china cabinet and all its contents and lots of ornamental bits and pieces.**

**I am having my suite re-covered, new curtains, the rooms decorated and the carpet cleaned. This has occupied me during January and February. It has been hard work emptying the cupboards etc. but very rewarding.**

**Bill says in March it will be time to begin work in the garden so something else to look forward to and I have put out the fat balls for my little birds.**

*Dorothy*

**For those of us who aren't 21 anymore!!**  
**George Carlin's Views on Aging**

Do you realize that the only time in our lives when we like to get old is when we're kids? If you're less than 10 years old, you're so excited about aging that you think in fractions.

"How old are you?" "I'm four and a half!" You're never thirty-six and a half. You're four and a half, going on five! That's the key

You get into your teens, now they can't hold you back. You jump to the next number, or even a few ahead.

"How old are you?" "I'm gonna be 16!" You could be 13, but hey, you're gonna be 16! And then the greatest day of your life . . . You become 21. Even the words sound like a ceremony. **YOU BECOME 21. YESSSS!!!**

But then you turn 30. Oooohh, what happened there? Makes you sound like bad milk! He **TURNED**; we had to throw him out. There's no fun now, you're Just a sour-dumpling. What's wrong? What's changed?

You **BECOME 21**, you **TURN 30**, then you're **PUSHING 40**. Whoa! Put on the brakes, it's all slipping away. Before you know it, you **REACH 50** and your dreams are gone.

But wait!!! You **MAKE** it to 60. You didn't think you would!

So you **BECOME 21**, **TURN 30**, **PUSH 40**, **REACH 50** and **MAKE** it to 60.

You've built up so much speed that you **HIT 70!** After that it's a day-by-day thing; you **HIT Wednesday!**

You get into your 80's and every day is a complete cycle; you **HIT** lunch; you **TURN 4:30**; you **REACH** bedtime. And it doesn't end there. Into the 90s, you start going backwards; "I Was **JUST 92.**"

Then a strange thing happens. If you make it over 100, you become a little kid again. "I'm 100 and a half!" May you all make it to a healthy 100 and a half!!

**HOW TO STAY YOUNG**

1. Throw out nonessential numbers. This includes age, weight and height. Let the doctors worry about them. That is why you pay "them."

2. Keep only cheerful friends. The grouches pull you down.

3. Keep learning. Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever. Never let the brain idle. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." And the devil's name is Alzheimer's.

4. Enjoy the simple things.

5. Laugh often, long and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath.

6. The tears happen. Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person, who is with us our entire life, is ourselves. Be **ALIVE** while you are alive.

7. Surround yourself with what you love , whether it's family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, hobbies, whatever. Your home is your refuge.

8. Cherish your health: If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, improve it. If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.

9. Don't take guilt trips. Take a trip to the mall, even to the next county; to a foreign country but **NOT** to where the guilt is.

10. Tell the people you love that you love them at every opportunity.

**AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:**

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.

**A list of Useful Men (or Ladies)**

Age Concern produce a "Word of Mouth" list of contractors and service providers who are recommended to do work. The list is long and would be too expensive for me to photocopy and post out to you.

A new list has been produced dated January 2008 and can be obtained by ringing 01902 572060

Joyce has asked me to re-print the following because she says it is what we are trying to achieve with our WRSG outings and holidays.

### Thoroughly Modern Granny

I have a little granny; she's really very old,  
But also unconventional in a most unusual mode  
She doesn't wear spectacles perched upon  
her nose,  
She's into contact lenses and varnishes her  
toes.  
Unlike some other grannies, who are home  
before it's dark  
She dresses up in a track suit and goes  
jogging in the park.  
And when I wish she'd sometimes stay and  
tuck me up in bed,  
She's off to study yoga and standing on her  
head.  
Some grannies sit in rocking chairs and  
crochet shawls indoors,  
My granny jumps upon a horse and rides  
across the moors.  
She goes on day trips with her gang, the  
over 60 club,  
They racket round the countryside and end  
up in a pub!  
And on the homeward journey, like a flock  
of singing birds,  
They harmonise old favourites with some  
very naughty words!  
I love my little granny; I think she's simply  
great,  
If that's what growing old is like, I simply  
cannot wait!



### Christmas coffee morning - Jam

I am pleased to say I was able to pass the  
telephone number for Joan who made the  
jam to June who bought the jam!  
Caring is sharing !!!

### A Funny Story

A boss wondered why one of his most  
valued employees had phoned in sick  
one day. Having an urgent problem with  
one of the main computers, he dialled the  
employee's home phone number and was  
greeted with a child's whisper.  
"Hello?"  
"Is your daddy home?" he asked.  
"Yes," whispered the small voice.  
"May I talk with him?"  
The child whispered, "No."  
Surprised and wanting to talk with an  
adult, the boss asked, "Is your Mummy  
there?"  
"Yes."  
"May I talk with her?"  
Again the small voice whispered, "No."  
Hoping there was somebody with whom he  
could leave a message, the boss  
asked "Is anybody else there?"  
"Yes," whispered the child, "a policeman."  
Wondering what a cop would be doing at  
his employee's home, the boss  
asked "May I speak with the policeman?"  
"No, he's busy", whispered the child.  
"Busy doing what?"  
"Talking to Mummy and Daddy and the  
Fireman" Came the whispered answer.  
Growing more worried as he heard what  
sounded like a helicopter through the  
earpiece on the phone, the boss asked,  
"What is that noise?"  
"A hello-copper" answered the whispering  
voice.  
"What is going on there?" demanded the  
boss, now truly apprehensive.  
Again, whispering, the child answered,  
"The search team just landed the hello-  
copper"  
Alarmed, concerned and a little frustrated  
the boss asked, "What are they searching  
for?"  
Still whispering, the young voice replied  
with a muffled giggle:  
"ME."

### Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this newsletter are taken  
in good faith and are not necessarily endorsed  
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