

INSIDE OUT

Committee meeting

15th June 2000

1. Cancer Link Training: We have now reached the number required to take us on to the next stage of the process. That will be to contact Betty Mitchell at Cancer Link to arrange our first meeting. For those of you new to the group we are aiming to get a number of members trained in counselling to enable us to go forward with our plans to be able to offer counselling to new stoma patients or those about to undergo surgery. We hope that talking to someone in similar circumstances would help the prospective patient feel they are not alone and that life can continue positively after stoma surgery.

2. Convatec Romania: We have sent 3 cases of surplus stoma supplies via convatec to Romania. We would like this to be an on-going thing with the help of our members and the involvement of other hospitals in our area.

3. 5th of Sept: Line Dancing spectacular. A barbecue has been arranged for the night. Bob would like to know if there are any vegetarians out there!!! If so could they contact Bob or Clare Bossom, so that we can arrange an alternative. Tickets will be available for sale from mid July, at £5, we hope our members' help to sell them and make the event a success.....Please contact Clare or Bob.

4. Open afternoons: Our first drop in open afternoon will be starting on Tuesday August 22nd from 2.30pm to 4.00pm. Next will be 26th Sept same time, same place. Members have been asking for a place to come in the afternoon to chat etc. We thought it would also be an opportune moment to have a stand near out-patients with information so we could direct them to our coffee /tearoom which is allocated in the same area as Clare's office. All volunteers would be welcome to help with coffee, teas etc.

5. **URGENT:** Call for help, or rather, are there any members who can put their hands on bunting etc to decorate our 5th of September Line Dancing Event.....Country and Western style. If you can help, please contact Bob on the contact list address or phone 0208 426 5203.

6. The turn out for our last meeting on counselling was a great success and the speaker Solveig Wilson gave us a lot to think about and helped to air people's thoughts.

INSIDE OUT LINE DANCING AND BARBECUE

5th September 2000

**Medawar Centre & Himsworth Hall
6th Floor
St Mark's Hospital**



**Tickets £5
from Clare Bossom or Bob
(see contact list)**

**All proceeds to go to the Marksman
Appeal and Cancer Link**

**Help!**

Calling all members,
nurses, doctors,
consultants - this
newsletter needs you!

**Thought of something? - Don't put it off
send it to me today - letters, articles
medical and non medical, questions for
other readers, poems, amusing or
interesting stories - anything you feel may
interest others to:** Susan Tuck

**13 Osborne Road, Redhill,
Surrey, RH1 2HX**

The Importance of Support Groups

Years ago support groups for people diagnosed with cancer were often frowned upon or dismissed as "touchy-feely." Many believed that talking about their feelings or asking for help were signs of weakness. Some even feared that meeting others with similar problems would fuel depression and self-pity.

Times have changed, however, and so have theories about the value of talk. Today more and more hospitals are offering emotional support - via groups and one-on-one counselling - as part of the standard treatment for rehabilitation. Earlier this year, the National Cancer Institute, together with two other groups, launched a national campaign to raise awareness of the vital role emotional support plays in enhancing quality of life for people with cancer. Some research suggests that support may even increase longevity.

With a little help from strangers - it makes sense that emotional support from a caring circle of close friends or family would buffer the stress suffered. But many patients say they lack open communication within their families. As research and the experiences of many people have borne out, involvement in a support group comprised of others in the same boat can fill a unique void.

Among the most telling studies was a 1989 investigation, led by Stanford University researchers. They evaluated 86 women with breast cancer that had already spread to other parts of the body. Fifty of them attended weekly support group meetings for at least a year in addition to

receiving standard medical treatment; 36 received only medical interventions. Not surprisingly, women in the support groups reported feeling less anxious, less depressed, and less bothered by pain than the women who had not participated in the meetings.

A more remarkable finding came to the fore years later. The women in the support groups survived an average of 18 months longer than the others. In fact, four years after the study began, one third of the participants in the support groups were still alive, while all 36 of the other women had died. This year the investigators re-examined the medical records and death certificates of the women and found that such factors as differences in medical treatment did not account for the discrepancy in survival rates between the two groups. Some experts believe this strengthens the case for support groups.

Experts also speculate that emotional assistance confers physical benefits by decreasing stress. Depression overworks the body's stress response system, and it may be that participating in a support group helps lift depression.

Thus, a group of peers can be a place where people can vent some of their feelings without suffering guilt about burdening an intimate partner or friend. While research on the mind-body connection and cancer is still preliminary, there is no doubt that emotional support can ease psychological stress. Support groups that were once considered ancillary aspects of treatment have moved into the mainstream, playing an integral role in enhancing - and possibly prolonging - the lives of millions of people.

*From Harvard Health Letter; Via Northern
Virginia The Pouch & Stillwater-Ponca City
(OK) Ostomy Outlook May 1999.*

Handy Hint!

*Wind Problem? Yakult yoghurt drinks
(found in the yoghurt section in most
supermarkets) - help to alleviate the
bad bacteria in the gut which cause
wind. After using these I even seem to
get away with drinking very fizzy
coca-cola!*

Letters to the editor

TRAVEL INSURANCE

I have had a problem getting a reasonably priced insurance for a trip to America in the summer.

The ileostomy association was very helpful until I had to tick a box on the application form, which meant that I had to ring for a quote. Unfortunately I had to have my ileostomy because of cancer and this six letter word caused panic in the underwriting section of the insurers.

I was advised to try the travel agents in the hospital complex. I did. They were most helpful but said that insurers were very wary, as cancer does not come suddenly as, for example, a heart attack.

I then phoned the Lynda Jackson Cancer Support unit at Mount Vernon and they again were very helpful. To cut a long story short I eventually got an exceptionally reasonable quote from *Bradford and Bingley Building Society* (08700 435 642) whom seem to treat cancer sufferers with tolerance.

Diane Owen

MY STORY

Having read Inside Out I thought I would share some of my life with you.

My name is Eric Midson, from Slough. I've been under St Mark's since 1949 having been born with Hirschsprungs disease in 1927. I'm known to our good friend, Solveig Wilson, Social Worker and I've always had good care and service there.

I now have a urostomy, scoliosis of the spine, partial hearing and diabetes. I'm very thankful one can get about after all this.

For the last 3 years I have been managing the running of a large refreshment bar – tea, coffee etc. I also raise money via raffles from time to time. I've many times been asked how does one do it. There isn't time for moaning – I have always tried to achieve something for my life. I have many friends in and out of the church. We have a stoma group up and running called the East Berks Ostomy circle meeting 4 times a year plus outing etc

May I personally wish you success, keep going we can all pull on one another's resources.

All the very best

Yours sincerely

Eric Midson

HIGHLAND FLING

Dear "Inside-Outers"

I was thinking of you as you had your last meeting, when I was relaxing after a very strenuous day walking up the hills and down into the valleys, through "burns", peat bogs, fields and forests and the pouring rain. I had just completed the third stage of the "West Highland Way" and had got soaked through to the skin but still managed to have had an enjoyable, challenging and satisfactory day.

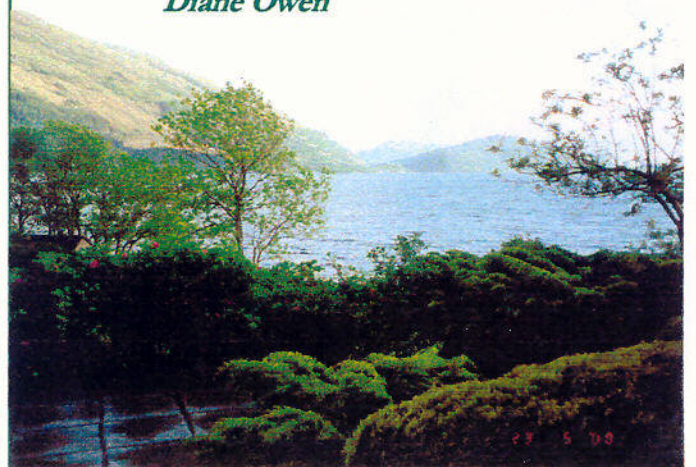
I understand that you also had the rain but you didn't have the rest – the magnificent scenery, the sheep having discussions with you as you walked, as well as the companionship of many other walkers. Most of you will think I am mad (as my family does). The photographs are of me having finished my effort and of the magnificent view of the loch from the hotel window.

I personally feel very satisfied as it was only a year since I was diagnosed with cancer, ten months since my ileostomy operation and only two months since I finished chemotherapy. I hope that when I next go for a check up my surgeon will not complain but say "well done".

There were eighty-eight walkers in all who were supporting St Luke's (the Grange) Hospice, most of them completed the whole ninety-five miles. I was please to complete the forty-two miles that I was aiming to do.

Your fellow "Inside-outer"

Diane Owen



Useful Contacts



Chairperson of Inside Out Group - Bob Azevedo-Gilbert
256 Merlins Court, Alexandra Avenue, South Harrow, Middx, HA2 9BZ

Ileostomy & internal pouch support group
0800 018 4724

NACC
01727 830 038

Urostomy Association
0800 018 4724

British Colostomy Association
0800 328 4257

Production of this newsletter is supported by

Fittleworth

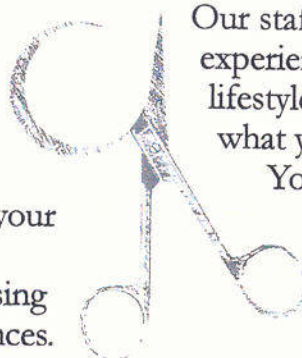
Medical Limited

committed to caring and cutting out the fuss

Fittleworth are an established supplier of ostomy items. As well as stocking a wide range of stomacare products, we offer a free cutting service.

Your 'personal' pattern, together with any other requirements, can be delivered right to your door.

We are independent market leaders in dispensing ostomy prescriptions and customising appliances.



Our staff have the knowledge and experience to help you enjoy a better lifestyle by listening carefully to what you tell them.

Your Home Fit Service is on hand to ensure you always get exactly what you need, quickly and discreetly.

CUSTOMER FREEPHONE 0800 378846



**Want to join
the support group?**

If you have a colostomy, ileostomy or a urostomy and you would like more information, please complete the form below and send it to:

Clare Bossom c/o Stoma Care Department, St. Mark's & Northwick Park Hospital, Watford Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 3UJ



Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Telephone _____