

Norfolk & Norwich Pulmonary Fibrosis Support Group

Extra Issue – April 2020



The appearance of the new temporary Nightingale Hospital facility in London to cope with the numbers needing hospital care with Covid-19 infection in the capital is sobering and impressive in equal measure. The speed with which the conference and exhibition centre has been converted into a field hospital is remarkable and I hope it will be able to provide the care needed and to take some of the pressure off our colleagues in the London hospitals.

On a lighter note, the media images have made me think of the old Nightingale wards, which were the norm for many years. Even in the 1980s when I was a Broadland School of Nursing student nurse, the wards in some parts of the old Norfolk & Norwich Hospital and certainly at the West Norwich Hospital (now Norwich Community Hospital) were long rows of beds around a central 'nurses' station'. These wards had their pros and cons; they did allow the nurses a full view of a ward full of patients in the way that is a bit more difficult in the smaller bays and side rooms of today's hospital wards. From the patient's point of view though, there was very little privacy and certainly no en-suite facilities! The wards were kept scrupulously tidy, although there were large vases of flowers everywhere, which were a liability if you were a bit overenthusiastic with the curtains around the bed! Nurses, and patients, had to keep to strict regimes, overseen by Ward Sisters, some of whom were quite terrifying to a young student nurse! All the chairs were in regimented positions on the same side of each bed, too far apart to speak to your neighbour easily, and I remember having drummed into me the importance of folding the sheets and blankets neatly so that each bed looked exactly the same. I don't remember ever questioning it but I can't imagine it made any difference to how quickly people got better!

It must have been challenging caring for people with infectious diseases in these wards; isolating those with confirmed or suspected infection would have been very difficult. I came across this photograph from the 1918 influenza pandemic; I'm not sure if the sheets strung between beds were just for privacy or for infection control but it looks a bit bleak. And I expect many of you will remember the polio epidemic of 1956 – a different virus and illness, of course, but one that was life-changing for many children and families and led to long periods of isolation and separation from loved ones.



I hope you are all managing the challenges of 'isolation' at home as well as possible. Several of you have been in touch with positive ideas for staying well, which I thought I would share in the pages of this issue. Do let me know if you have any more suggestions, or photos of what you have been doing, that you are happy to share in a future issue. Stay safe and well.

Best wishes, Sandra

Coping with 'Confinement' during Covid-19

The sunshine over Easter weekend was very welcome and, if you are lucky enough to have a garden, you will have noticed that nature is, as always, reminding us that the patterns of life continue, with increasing colour as the plants display for us.

After a fairly challenging day, I received a lovely little video montage from one of our members, Lorraine, which she has kindly allowed me to share with you all. There is something very reassuring about the reliable, predictability of the natural world and I hope Lorraine's pictures cheer you as much as they did me.

If you can, try to get some fresh air and sunshine each day. And if you don't have a garden, look out for programmes on the television that can give you a sense of what is happening in the outside world or have a look on the internet, where lots of people seem to be writing about nature at the moment.



Many people are finding the social confinement the most difficult aspect to cope with as usual social groups and gatherings have had to be suspended. Michael and Elaine suggest that it is never too late to learn new things and have been embracing the opportunities the internet and social media can offer. They have quickly got to grips with WhatsApp – for those who are yet to discover it, this is a free App that can be accessed via your smartphone, which enables you to send messages and photos without cost if you have internet access. Michael has been able to see his 7-month-old granddaughter sitting up for the first time – these life milestones are important and you don't have to miss out completely. WhatsApp and other Apps, like FaceTime and Skype, also allow you to make video or voice calls over the internet – I have been speaking to my sons this way over the last few weeks, somehow helps to be able to see them now and again rather than just speak on the phone.

Easter has felt very unusual this year. Faith is important to many people and this is usually a time for spiritual and family celebration regardless of religion. Michael and Elaine tell me they have been able to stream Mass from Walsingham and other Churches around the UK via a website called churchservices.tv/Walsingham. All you need is a smartphone and a TV with HDMI port and a device that allows you to livestream from your phone or computer. They use Google Chromecast (and say it is very easy to use!) and I think the Amazon Firestick would do the same thing – these are little gadgets that plug into the TV and open up a whole lot of new viewing from the internet.

Having a variety of things to do throughout the day has been mentioned by several of you – reading, jigsaw puzzles, crosswords, radio and many of you with gardens are enjoying the steady progress of Spring.

Try to plan some regular exercise into your day – we get out of condition very easily and keeping up some daily activity will help. Walking indoors, in your garden or in your neighbourhood if you can keep a physical distance from others. Or have a look online if you can – there are routines to suit all abilities on You Tube and the British Lung Foundation have some specific advice for those with lung conditions.

I am impressed by your determination to continue to exercise and the inventive ways you have found to keep active at home. Forbes sent me a short video, which I wish I could share via the pages of this newsletter – he has set up a practice driving range, swinging his golf club to send the ball down the 'fairway' before picking up his kit and walking to the next shot on his treadmill! Michael suggested doing everything in '3 way trips' – trying to do everything 3 times, going to the kitchen or the loo for example, and getting up and doing a little exercise in each ad break when watching TV. As he says, every little helps!

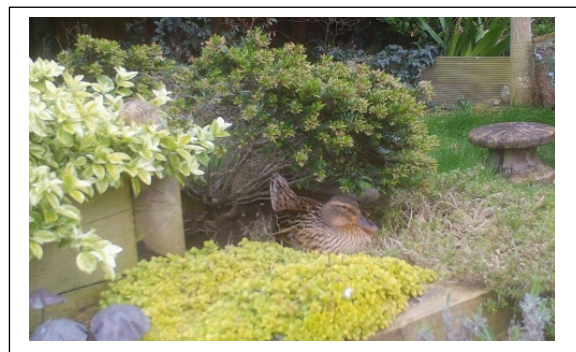
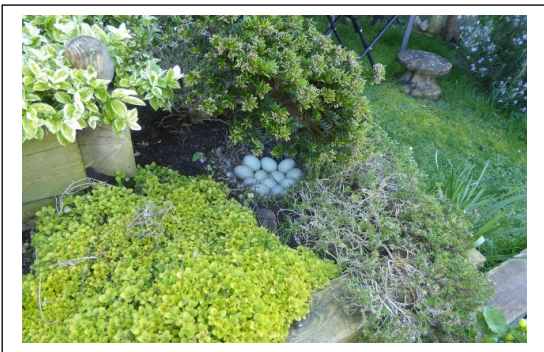
Coping with 'Confinement' during Covid-19

Jill is getting more confident using the internet and doing an online exercise class twice a week, as well as walking round her garden for at least 30 minutes a day and notes, if all else fails, there is DIY and housework! She also mentions how much contact from family and friends helps – again, a common theme for most of us. Jill's family phone every day and they have a group FaceTime call once a week. Mick points out that the technology allows calls to those living abroad, those who you can't just pop and see even under normal circumstances can be brought much 'closer' via the wonders of the internet and a screen.

If you don't have close family and friends, do reach out to your local community voluntary services. The Covid-19 crisis has seen local communities mobilise in a way I can't recall happening before and lots of areas have local volunteers who can do bits of shopping, pick up medicines or just 'phone for a chat. Check with your local council or community centre who should be able to put you in touch with someone near to you. Do stay safe – don't share personal or financial information or feel pressurised to disclose anything you don't feel comfortable with. Volunteers should not come into your home and should have some form of ID.

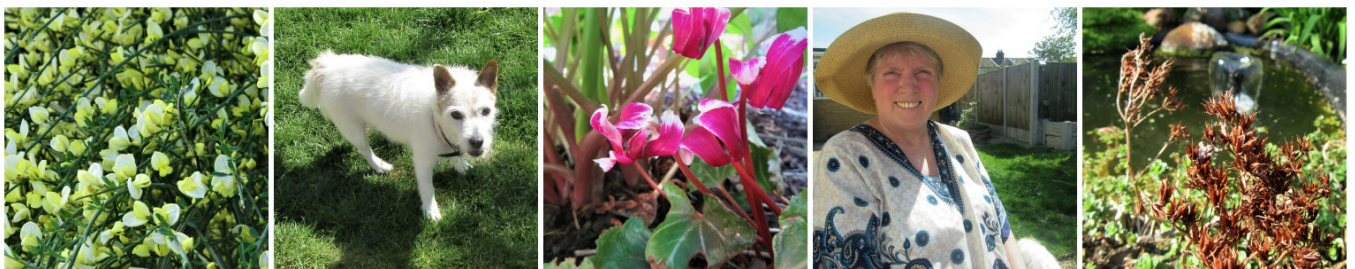
What about trying your hand at something new? Most of us do have internet access now – even if it is via your phone – and there is a wealth of freely available courses or Apps to keep the brain cells ticking over. How about learning a language, taking up a new hobby, writing a diary or journal? Maybe now is the time to write everything down about your family history – one of those things I really wish I had taken more time to do with relatives who are no longer here – this can be a fascinating topic to connect you with your past family as well as to share with your present (and future!) family.

Susan is another member finding her garden a positive environment. When the weather permits, she has meals outside, she is using it as her gym, doing 10 laps of the garden as her daily walk and enjoying noticing the emerging flowers as she does a little light gardening. Her garden this year has seen a mallard take up residence under a shrub, laying an egg each morning until she had a clutch of 12! Susan and her husband are watching and waiting for the arrival of 12 ducklings in a few weeks' time!



A number of you have suggested trying to limit how much news you watch or listen to, perhaps just catching up once a day. It is very easy to feel a bit overwhelmed by the volume of mostly not very cheery news we are hearing if you listen to it all day, particularly when we all feel powerless to do very much about it. Try to focus on what you *can* do, day to day, to make the best of each day, keep as well as you can and keep a sense of humour if you can.

Thanks to all who sent me contributions. Do send any more thoughts and ideas through and I will try to include in the next issue of the newsletter. A few more photos from Lorraine for you to enjoy...



Introducing the Lung Physiologists!

Some of you may already have been contacted by the ladies in the lung function lab over the telephone. Katy and Natasha are kindly stepping in and picking up calls that come through to 01603 289654 as I have been pulled to other duties for the most part during the Covid-19 crisis. Most of you will have met them at some point if you have been to the respiratory outpatient clinic – these are the ladies who put you through your paces with the important (but not necessarily enjoyable!) breathing tests. Those of you who usually have regular blood tests will be aware that it is a bit harder at the moment to get routine blood tests. If you do have a blood test you will have noticed you are not getting your usual letters with results but we are keeping an eye on them and Natasha and Katy will give you a call and put the form for your next blood test in the post to you. If there are queries they are not able to answer, they can get hold of the Respiratory Consultants or me for advice and will get back to you as soon as they can. Bear with us during this strange time – we are doing our best to adapt and continue to provide you with some support but we know we are not providing the service as we usually do.



Useful Information Sources

Websites:

The lung charities have some helpful information and resources; general information regarding living with lung conditions but also, at the moment, information about Coronavirus (Covid-19). Most also have helplines for further information and advice.

www.actionforpulmonaryfibrosis.org Action for Pulmonary Fibrosis **Advice Line 01223 785725**

www.pulmonaryfibrosistrust.org Pulmonary Fibrosis Trust **Advice Line 01543 442191**

www.blf.org.uk (British Lung Foundation) **Helpline 03000 030 555**

www.europeanlung.org/en (European Lung Foundation)

www.sarcoidosisuk.org (UK Sarcoidosis Charity)

Local contacts:

Sandra Olive, Consultant Nurse, Respiratory Medicine – 01603 289654

Oxygen/Pulmonary Rehabilitation Specialist Nurses & Breathe Easy Norwich – 01603 289779



And finally, a challenge for you...!

Whilst looking for old photographs, I came across this picture. This was taken in the Leicester House Nurses home, which was also part of the Broadland School of Nursing, in October 1987, when we had just received our final exam results at the end of our 3rd year of training (I got my finals results the day of the 1987 hurricane!). Leicester House became the Department of Respiratory Medicine until we moved to the current NNUH site and has since been turned into flats.

Those of you that have met me, can you work out which is me?! Answer in the next issue!

Best wishes, stay safe and well.

Sandra