



# PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER



## WELCOME TO YOUR NEW YEAR 2021 NEWSLETTER AND WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

### HAPPY NEW YEAR!

As we look back to last year, we could spend time thinking about the horror and sadness which the pandemic brought us all, but why don't we, instead, celebrate the BEST of 2020: the most amazing frontline NHS staff who, having coped so heroically with the first wave of Covid, then had to turn around, and do it all again, even though they were so exhausted; those who worked alongside them, and those who worked in the background enabling them to do their wonderful jobs; the scientists, who worked night and day to create a vaccine, and continue to conduct research into the new variants; and all the volunteers who offered whatever help was needed.

Let us also thank the millions of kind people who were working tirelessly in their own communities, to try and make peoples' lives better and safer, and, of course, our own TMG staff who have striven to look after all their patients, despite all the hurdles that the pandemic presented to them.

I salute them all, particularly as they are ALL still doing the same caring in 2021! I know we will all want to say thank you, and, if I may, the best way to do that is to stick to the rules so that we lessen the load for them all.

Many of you will, no doubt, be looking back at the lively PPG meetings which took place prior to 2020, but hopefully there will be those who have been able to join in with PPG Zoom meetings over the past year. At least we have been able to see each other and engage in conversation and also, importantly, raise concerns that we may have. Some of the great school students who attended our meetings in

better times have now embarked on university courses, and two in particular, Owain and Joseph, have managed to join in our Zoom meetings. They have kindly agreed to give us a flavour of their first term at university, Autumn 2020.

### Owain

I have been having a great time in Sheffield. It's a really nice city and I've been able to get to know it quite well despite the restrictions. There are lots of parks nearby and independent shops and restaurants which I have enjoyed exploring. I have met lots of nice people and have just signed the tenancy agreement for a house for next year with six others!

My course is very full on, but I am enjoying it nonetheless. Unfortunately we only have one hour a week of face to face teaching for dissection and the rest of our teaching is online. This means lots of time spent at my desk which can become very monotonous however there are some benefits such as being able to have a longer lie in because I don't need to walk to the medical school! Thankfully I've only had one essay to do so far which was about the history of Thalidomide.

I have luckily escaped catching coronavirus, symptomatically at least, but I did have to self-isolate for eight days in October after someone in my anatomy group tested positive. Lots of people in my block however had to self-isolate for 14 days.

I am looking forward to coming home soon to see family and friends and will have my fingers crossed that we will be allowed to return in January!

I have really enjoyed and found it helpful being a part of the PPG and hope to continue to be able to do so.

### **Joseph**

The first term at University is always a unique experience, and this was certainly true this year. After the controversy surrounding A-level exams and results, I was lucky to have my place confirmed at Trinity College, Cambridge in the Autumn. We were sent a booklet filled with general information about the structure of the course and a list of vaccinations we had to have. At the end of September, we packed up the car and set off for the four-hour drive from Long Ashton. My room is quite spacious, overlooking a busy (and noisy) street. The culinary facilities are somewhat limited, with the facilities in my kitchen limited to two microwaves, a toaster and a kettle.

We were certainly not lulled into a false sense of security: on day one we were given two carrier bags full of textbooks, a box of plastic bones and an essay. A typical week for me would consist of around 8-10 lectures on biochemistry, anatomy, physiology, embryology and social health/ethics, 2 hours of either dissection or applied anatomy, 2-4 hours of 'practicals' (completely online due to coronavirus) and 3 hours of supervision, where an academic tests us on what we've learned. The workload is pretty full on, with each supervisor either setting questions, an essay or a presentation (sometimes all 3) for the next week. We do full body dissection, which was daunting at first, but is a really great method of learning anatomy, and becomes much less scary after a while.

The social side has obviously been limited due to the pandemic situation, though our student union tried their best to make it as fun and safe as possible. Going to hall for food, socially distant meetups and zoom socials are a great way to safely meet people in the current situation. Corridors and staircases are organised into households, with weekly

testing. Despite everything, I have really enjoyed my first term, and although due to current restrictions I won't be going back for the spring term, I'm looking forward to getting back into my work.

WE wish them well, and again thank them and their fellow students, for all that they contributed to the PPG: lively discussion, practical help with the newsletters and with IT issues at our PPG lectures, and being a valuable connection with the staff at their schools. We miss you and wish you all the best in whatever you are embarking upon this year.

### **GUEST SPEAKERS**

During our Zoom meetings, we have been lucky enough to have some speakers, and the theme has been "Help in the Community."

### **Nailsea Community Trust**

Nancy Elliott joined us for our PPG meeting in October, and gave us an excellent account of the work that the Nailsea Community Trust does.

The Nailsea Community Trust was set up in 1988, by Norman Baker, using a bequest from Joyce Thatcher, which she left in her will to alleviate poverty and improve the quality of people's lives. Its region includes Nailsea, Backwell, Chelvey, Brockley, Tickenham and Wraxall.

The main aims are:

- 1) To help people who are in financial need to purchase items which will improve their quality of life - for example house-hold items such as white goods- and also to pay for essential repairs.
- 2) To help with educational needs, for example helping to fund educational courses such as college courses, or to buy textbooks for university.

- 3) To help in the field of sport, for example a local football club was given help to rent an all-weather pitch for the winter period.
- 4) To give funding to organisations who work in the community, for example Nailsea Festival of Music, Wellspring Counselling, Trendelwood Festival, Skate Park Festival, Leg Club and our own PPG Health Events such as the Women's Health Event

The Trust is funded partly by an annual sum of £4,000, given by Nailsea Town Council, and also by bequests and donations. Nancy feels that the Trust is not well known in the area, and would like us to spread the word, so that other individuals and groups can be helped by this very worthy organisation.

#### **Emergency Food Bank; Community Food Club; Community Larder**

Unfortunately, Shelley, our speaker, was unable to join us. Under the umbrella of Nailsea Community Group she tells us, in the write-up below, about three different forms of food support

"The Emergency Food Bank offers a completely anonymous one-off food delivery service to help people get through to that next source of income when unexpected financial problems arise.

The Community Food Club is for those who receive Working Tax Credits, Universal Credit, or Pension Credit, or whose children are eligible for Pupil Premium. For £3.50, we provide two bags of store-cupboard items worth £10—£15.

The aim of the Community Larder is to redistribute good-quality surplus food that would otherwise be wasted. It is open to everyone in the community; people are asked to take up to five items (plus bread). It costs nothing, as all the food is 'rescued' and needs a home."

#### **2021**

And now here we are, in 2021.

The Vaccination programme is being rolled out across the country and here, in North Somerset, Tyntesfield Medical Group is doing an amazing job! At the time of going to print, there is now significant progress in the over 70s group.

As we all know, the programme is a major challenge, if for no other reason than that it is so difficult to make future appointments when there is no certainty as to when the next delivery of vaccine will happen! The message from TMG is that we can all play our part by being patient and waiting our turn. Phoning the surgeries does not help, as the receptionists are not involved with the booking process.

A few months ago, the vaccines were still looming in the future, and so back in October, we had no expectations at all, but now we do! We know we won't be forgotten, so let's all hang on in there!

I hope this Newsletter finds you well, and that we can all look forward to a brighter 2021.....AND to having a REAL PPG meeting together again!



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