

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's Editorial

LOCKDOWN NEWS

Improvement!?! Well, having my haircut is an improvement in more ways than one!!!

Each country has its' own ideas/roadmap as to how progress hopefully will be made. There is no guarantee with any of the suggested dates that they will be met. For us as a branch our main criteria are two-fold: when can we re-convene "indoor meetings" and when can we consider the resumption of "trips"?

Personally I think we will be looking at Wednesday 1st September on our roadmap as a date when there is potential for us to re-convene.

Perhaps pencil the date in your diaries and, if the roadmap targets are met, we will be in a more informed position to let you know if we have a green light for Go!

Vaccinating the masses *Andy Mardell*

Until 1st April 2020 I was working a couple of bank shifts as a nurse on the endoscopy unit at the University Hospital of Wales. That was until the Coronavirus pandemic changed all our lives. I was advised that I was in a high-risk group and that working in clinical area where aerosol generating procedures were being undertaken was a risk I should not take. In some respects, this was the phoney war and the hospital had become eerily quiet. The main corridor from the stairs from the concourse to the x-ray department that would be heaving with people on a weekday was almost deserted. There is a name for the feeling experienced by being in a place that is normally bustling with people but is now abandoned and quiet which is *kenosis*. It was really a strange experience. There was an air of impending forbiddance. The wards had begun to discharge patients and non-urgent surgery and other procedures cancelled. There was a great deal of anxiety very little Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

After leaving that day I felt that it was likely to be some time if ever, that I would go back to work there. As it was two things happened in the couple of weeks following my departure that further illustrated the virulence of this egregious virus. Firstly, I heard that a nurse from one of the wards that had collected a patient from the unit, on one of the last days that I worked, died of COVID. He was a few years older than me. Secondly, several of the staff that I worked with also became infected with the virus and were unwell. Some of them are still suffering with *long Covid* symptoms. I had felt somewhat guilty about leaving my colleagues there to deal with what was going on since unlike me they had no choice but to stay.

One door closes...

When the opportunity arose to become a vaccinator, I thought this would be a chance to make a contribution to the effort and so I made contact with someone within Cardiff and Vale UHB to offer my services. I have no experience in vaccinating but when I did my nurse training we were taught to give

intramuscular injections and, although it has been many years since I administered one, I reckoned that the basic technique had not changed. I was eventually contacted by someone and told what I needed to do. This involved quite a bit of e-learning and a meeting online with one of the senior staff. I got a glimpse of what students have had to endure during the lockdowns as learning via a computer screen is a somewhat soulless experience.

When all the learning was complete, I was invited to the Mass Vaccination Centre in Splott for an induction day that included a session on Basic Life Support which, as you can imagine, is not straightforward in the midst of a pandemic caused by a droplet spread virus. Then it was time to try and



access the Welsh Immunisation System (WIS) which was a challenge in itself. The computer system is used across the whole of Wales and there are doubtless hundreds of staff logging on to and using it at the same time. Not surprisingly it crashes from time to time. By contrast the administration of the Pfizer vaccine into the deltoid muscle was really quite simple and “generally painless for the citizens” (not patients you’ll notice). I managed to administer about half a dozen on that first morning. For some of the people it was quite an emotional experience since some of the older ones with pre-existing conditions had been shielding and hardly been out since March of last year and were just happy to have a face to face conversation with someone. One colleague told me of a lady that brought in a photo album of her family just to show someone and have a chat. You would have to have a heart of stone not to feel at least a pang of emotion at that. Once the vaccine is administered there is a self-timed period of 15 minutes to wait for citizens during which they are asked to contact a member of staff if they feel unwell. There is a report of one anaphylactic reaction since the centre opened which was, fortunately, successfully dealt with.

How difficult can it be?

Having got to grips with the computer system, identifying that I had the correct person in front of me, going through the required questions and actually administering the vaccine to about half a dozen citizens it was time to be taught how to draw up the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine. This turned out to be way harder than I had anticipated. Even though I had read the guidance on what this entailed I was not prepared for what was actually involved. Each vaccine ampoule has 5 to 6 doses suspended in a solution of 0.45 of a millilitre. After initially inspecting the ampoule for any particles and inverting it ten times, 1.8mls of normal saline is added to the ampoule and the corresponding amount of air is then carefully taken back into the syringe so as not to draw up any vaccine (I hope you’re keeping up with this) and then the ampoule inverted another 10 times. Next 0.3ml of the vaccine is now drawn up into six separate 1ml



syringes. Each step of this process is checked with a colleague for the correct amount and to ensure no particles from the rubber bung are pushed into the solution. Just to make the process a little more challenging the numbers on the syringe are black as is the plunger seal which is also an odd shape (see the photo). All this presents quite a challenge for someone with older eyes to see clearly and means that it takes extra care and time for some of us to

ensure accuracy. It was reminiscent of Murphy's third law '*nothing is as easy as it looks*'. Needless to say, I hope that I do not have to do this part of the role too often. I gather the drawing up of the Oxford/AstraZeneca is considerably easier!

Follow up job

In recent weeks the centre at Splott has been administering the second dose of the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine so I have vaccinated many health and social care workers who were in the first priority group. It is a great leveller when everyone is treated the same. One minute I have a security guard, next a care home worker, an occupational therapist, student optometrist, nurses from several specialities, consultant physician, a receptionist, social worker, surveyor, maintenance engineer to name a few. All grateful and appreciative to be able to receive what we hope will be a game changing gift.

A bit of reflection

There is no doubt that the world has been turned upside down in the past year. Things we took for granted in the past are currently not an option and I suspect that life will not be the same again for some considerable time. There is so much to reflect upon and describe about this unprecedented mass vaccination process and the work and effort that has gone into making it happen. My final thoughts and gratitude are directed towards those that made the vaccines possible. From the scientists, doctors, researchers and laboratory staff that developed the vaccines, and not forgetting all those people worldwide that came forward and took part in the various trials for the greater good of humanity. We all owe these people so much.



Here are some people you may recognise, having their vaccines.



Barry Art Group and Camera Club pool their skills

Lin and Frank Learner came up with the idea of pooling their resources during lockdown. Lin is a keen painter and member of a BARUC Art Group; Frank, as a member of Barry Camera Club, arranged to share photos from the Camera Club to inspire Lin's Art Group and encourage painting during lockdown. Two photos are now sent out each month to Art Group members. Below is one such photo of Rest Bay (just west of Porthcawl in South Wales) accompanied by Lin's resulting watercolour painting.

Originally called Long Bay, the bay was renamed in 1878 after The Rest; the Grade II-listed building in Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan, built as a seaside convalescent hospital. The intention was to give care and respite to those who worked locally - often in appalling and dangerous conditions - especially miners. This 1862 initiative was led by Dr James Lewis from Maesteg with the support of Florence Nightingale. It was maintained by private contributors; principally Miss Claudia Griffiths from Neath (£1,800) and John Cory



Esquire - coal magnate and owner of Dyffryn House (£500), as well as trade unions, friendly societies and many private individuals. The first patients admitted to The Rest included survivors of the Tynnewydd Colliery disaster in 1877, after the miners had spent ten days trapped underground.

It was requisitioned as an auxiliary military hospital in WW1 and WW2, and provided care for more than 2,500 wounded soldiers from Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

The Rest, which sits on a cliff top overlooking Rest Bay, returned to civilian use as a convalescent hotel, then care of the elderly, before it closed in 2013.

The building was converted to luxury flats in 2018 when increasingly the cost of its upkeep was prohibitive - and this saved this historic building from dereliction.

Today, Rest Bay is in the Lonely Planet guide as the Welsh beach that can rival any surf spot in Europe. As a child brought up in South Wales, Lin has happy memories of visits to Rest Bay. The photo and painting evoke great memories of an incredible beach and walks near the Tudor-built Sker House - now privately owned but formerly part of a Cistercian grange.



Lin Learner

Walking Group

Tuesday walks around Cardiff Bay have recommenced – socially distanced walking.
Meet adjacent to the Oystercatcher Pub, Penarth Marina at 10:30am.

Membership 2021 / 2022

Renewal date: April 1st 2021

Fee: £10.

Payment by cheque: “Cardiff NHS Retirement Fellowship”

Post or Hand Deliver to: 79 Blackoak Road, Cyncoed, Cardiff CF23 6QU

Payment Online: Account Number: 19641230. Sort Code: 52-21-06

(State name and payment reference if space allows.)