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The Solent and IOW Pituitary Support Group

The Pituitary Foundation
Solent & Isle of Wight Support Group

Newsletter No. 96, September 2026

Hello everyone,

Welcome to another edition of the Solent and IOW Pituitary Support Group Newsletter, for September 2026.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed, by sending material for the newsletter and giving their encouragement.

We aim to produce a newsletter four times a year, and it is timed to be issued shortly before each of the main support group meetings. For 2026 these meetings will be at Portchester Parish Hall. We will no longer be meeting at the Cosham Community Centre. The next meeting at Portchester is on **Saturday 26 September at 10:30 am.** Please note that we are meeting at 10:30, half an hour later than before.

The address of Portchester Parish Hall and directions to get there are given on page 3 of this newsletter.

When we meet there will be tea, coffee, juice and biscuits. As our speaker, we are pleased to welcome Specialist Endocrine Nurse Sirbrina Ramharack. She has been with us before and it is always a very useful and informative session. There will also be time to chat generally, and to give and receive advice and information about pituitary conditions and related matters.

We often welcome new patients and their partners, family or friends at meetings, so if you have recently found out you are a pituitary patient or just found out that we as a support group exist, please get in touch and join us for future meetings and you'll be made very welcome.

Find us on Facebook - The Solent and IOW page is in the form of a group. Together we'll be updating and posting relevant information on there. Anyone that uses Facebook can search and join the group. It is listed as the following: - The Solent & IOW Pituitary Patient Support Group. This is in addition to the main Pituitary Foundation page and other pituitary Facebook groups.

========== Meeting dates for your diary for 2026 – Change of venue ==========

Note that in 2026 we will no longer be meeting in Cosham. Instead we will be at Portchester Parish Hall, 1 Assheton Court, Portchester PO16 9PS at the new time of 1030 am so enjoy an extra half hour in bed 😁. As usual, we will have tea, coffee, juice and biscuits available. You may bring your own snacks if you wish.

2026 dates (all Saturdays at 10:30 am):

- 26 September. We will have Specialist Endocrine nurse Sirbrina Ramharack – also, have you heard of dogs being trained to detect low cortisol levels? We have a patient coming along with Sirbrina who is going through this process with a charity & we can enjoy hearing her story.
- 5 December. Our pre-Christmas meeting with festive food and a quiz

In 2027 our meetings will be on Saturdays March 27, June 26, September 25 and December 4

Possible speakers for future meetings include Dr James Lawrence and Dr Smith from Salisbury, a radiographer, a pharmacist, and blood bikers, and on mindfulness, laughing yoga, a life coach etc.

There is always a raffle at the main meetings in Portchester and on the Isle of Wight. Prizes gratefully received on the day please.

Receiving your newsletter - If you would rather receive your newsletter by email, please email Howard at: howardpearce1@yahoo.com or Gail at g.weingartner@btinternet.com and let them know. Or let Gail or Howard know if you wish to come off the mailing list altogether.

More than half of the newsletters are now sent out by email. Unfortunately, there are often a few people who have changed their email address, and they do not get their electronic copy. We usually manage to send them a copy by post, but inevitably it is a few days late. If you have changed your email address, please let us know.

The cost of posting the newsletter – Printing and postage of the newsletter for those who do not get their copy by email is a major cost item, around £300 a year, and the price of stamps keeps going up. It would be very much appreciated if those receiving the newsletter by post would make some contribution towards the cost of printing and postage, either by stamps or money, or change to email delivery. Gail and Pam Weingartner and Melissa Reeds are always happy to receive a book of stamps from anyone who receives the newsletter by post. They send a special thank you to everyone who has given stamps or money for this.

It's <u>your</u> newsletter – We would love you to write something for the newsletter. If you have something to share – your experience as a patient, something you have done, some wise words, something to make us laugh, or something that we all ought to know – please send it for the next newsletter, which we are aiming to produce in November 2026.

Donations

Our thanks to our fundraisers for their kind donations and fundraising on our behalf. It is because of the continued support of this kind that we are able to have our quarterly meetings and fund the newsletter. But, **we DO NEED** some proactive fundraising to keep our bank balance in the black, so please give thought to and let one of us know your ideas.

A special thank you to all who contributed to this newsletter.

A reminder – moving from Cosham to Portchester

We will now be meeting at Portchester Parish Hall (the smaller hall). The address is 1 Assheton Court, Portchester PO16 9PS. We are impressed with the facilities, the disabled spaces/access/kitchen and adjacent free parking. The change took place for our meeting on 28 March and the start time has changed from 10 am to 10.30 am. We think this time will be better for everyone. We have been developing plans to make it a great meeting! Portchester Parish Hall is near to Fareham, Portsmouth and Havant with good facilities, disabled access and toilets. Disabled parking is on site at the front of the building.

This will be our third meeting in Portchester. The room is a little smaller than at Cosham, but it worked well enough.

Directions

From Portsmouth/A3M From the A27, turn left into Castle Street (brown sign to Portchester Castle) at the first roundabout when entering Portchester. Take the first right into Assheton Court and you will see the Parish Hall immediately on your left. Continue past the hall and the free car park entrance is just past the hall on the left. Further parking is round the left bend on the right.

From Fareham From the A27, take the right hand exit into Castle Street at the last roundabout (the opposite side of the station signpost). Take the first right into Assheton Court and you will see the Parish Hall immediately on your left. The free car park entrance is just past the hall on the left. Further parking is round the left bend on the right.

As you turn into Castle Street from the A27, the Methodist Church hall is on the right, it's not the Parish Hall, so don't park there!

You will see the Parish Hall on the left as you turn into Assheton Court. The free car park is open to all, so it could get busy on a Saturday. I would advise parking by 10.15 latest if possible.

Public transport: The train station is in the Hillway, off the main roundabout, around 8 minutes walk to the Parish Hall. The bus stop is near the precinct, around 3 minutes walk away.

If you have any questions or concerns please email: jenny.gatland@googlemail.com

Dr Victor Lawrence

For some time now we have been fortunate enough to have Dr Victor Lawrence, the consultant endocrinologist from St Mary's hospital on the Isle of Wight, to answer our written questions in the newsletter. However, he has announced that he will soon be retiring.

Gail Says - Our 'oh so lovely' Dr Victor Lawrence from St Mary's Hospital on the IoW has started the retirement process, although will still be on-board for a while yet. He has done us proud over the years with answering our questions in the newsletter but now decided to step down. We will miss him so very much but that's life and we will do our best to source another Endo to submit our questions to. Dr Lawrence was the speaker at the Isle of Wight meeting on 18 July. As a 'thank you' for his considerable support we presented him with a Lego motorbike to while away his time.

At this stage we do not know if Dr Lawrence will be available to answer questions in the future. We wish him well in this new stage of his life.

Touching base… a poem from Jackie Stuart – thanks Jackie 👍

Before you were diagnosed what did you know?
A Pituitary condition from the word go.

Worlds turned upside down and inside out.
Life's changed dramatically it makes you want to shout.

At first you question…what is this and what do I do?
As the years go by you learn to think about you.

Doctors, hospitals and appointments galore.
Thinking aloud…I have to live with this but how much more?

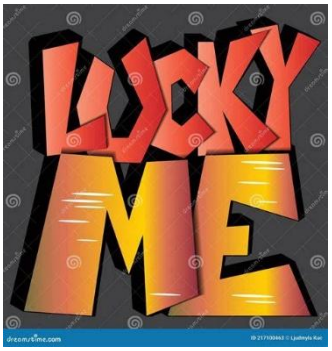
Med alarms going off the same time each day.
What is that? You hear people whisper and say.

Daily challenges tell you when that's enough and when to rest.
You can't do this on your own but must do your very best.

Get support from family, friends and the Pituitary team.
Sometimes they are the only ones that know what you mean.

Hidden disabilities you can't see. They don't make people stop and stare.
So remember to thank those around you knowing that they care.

A big 'Thank You' to Carl Hall for the following contribution:

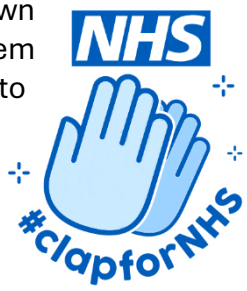


I was diagnosed with a Pituitary Macro Adenoma in 2013, it was successfully removed and I've been under the watchful eye of the Portsmouth QA Hospital endocrine team ever since. I'm "lucky" in that I am just on the standard dose Hydrocortisone and a 12 weekly Testosterone injection, when I could be on more hormone replacements....so at least my Pituitary gland is still doing some things. Since 2013 I've had regular MRI scans, blood tests, a DEXA Scan (I had to fight for that one), eye clinic checkups (my optic nerve was slightly damaged by the adenoma) and many Endocrine clinic appointments, which have, for the last few years, been telephone appointments.

The telephone appointments are ok because generally it is only a fairly transactional chat, checking everything is ok and that I don't have any symptoms cropping up that would be of concern. But I'm not sure this kind of appointment would be so good if I was a more complicated case, I think I'd prefer a face-to-face appointment. But it is what it is!

I had my most recent telephone appointment only last week and I asked the doctor whether they still needed to keep an eye on me, is there a chance the adenoma could grow back after all these years. She kind of avoided the question, instead focusing back on potential symptoms, drug doses etc. but reading between the lines, the answer is "yes", it could grow back. But I suppose it could for anyone?!

The reason for my rambling is that although the standard of care I receive isn't super attentive, it is a care that is available here in England/the UK, it's the NHS. Even 13 years down the line, the "system" still keeps an eye on me, still I am encouraged to contact them directly if I am worried about a symptom. I've just received another blood form to make sure everything is where it should be. Part of me began by thinking "am I a burden....do they really want to be speaking to little old me after all this time", but actually it is a caring system. Incidentally my 2pm telephone call didn't come until about 5pm, which was fine as it happens as I don't work and was in all afternoon, just the symptom a vastly overworked NHS.



So, I do thank my lucky stars that I don't have a particularly bad case of adrenal insufficiency, most days I'm fine with maybe 2 or 3 days a month when the brain fog and exhaustion gets me. But I know that somewhere in the background, the NHS exists for me and whilst it is far from perfect, knowing it is there is a great comfort.

Hi all the Quiet One here (Paul Oastler). I hope we've all been taking our tablets and are feeling well as can be.

OK, first I have a confession to make I have answered my own question from the last newsletter when I asked the all important question that's been on our lips since time began. How big is a Blue Whale's Pituitary gland? Well I can reveal by the powers of Google it is between 3 to 5 cm in width, weighing in at around 35 grams. On the other end of the scale the pituitary gland of a mouse is 3mm in width. I know you will all sleep well knowing these facts. Talking of sleep, how difficult it has been in this hot weather. I suffer with sleep apnoea, which I'm sure you all know involves a tube blowing air through your hooter all night; most uncomfortable in this heat and I must admit I have taken it off after a few hours some nights.

WOW !!! I know you're going to find this hard to believe that Friday 28th August (I'll send my bank paying in details on request) is my 70th birthday. When I was young, I thought when you reached the age of 60 you were a dinosaur. I've already received a couple of presents, although one has to go back already. It's a chair with a large hole in the seat obviously a manufacturing fault, but to cover the hole up they have fixed in a lid?.

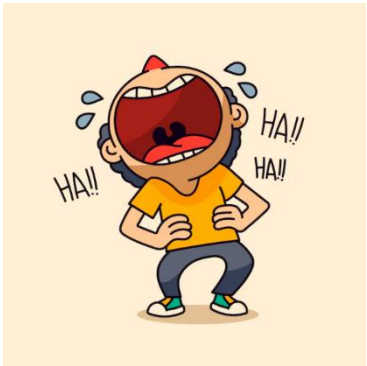
I'm not supposed to know but my local pharmacy are organising a party for me as a thank you for keeping them in business.

As for my health, it's been ok. I still get tired a lot of the time but I am still enjoying working but now take it easy. Yes, it is frustrating as my brain is telling me I am 50 but my body has other ideas. I also have an allotment but it has really suffered this year with the heat & the only thing that seemed to grow well are blackberries, so its blackberry crumble for this year's Christmas doo.

Completely off the radar but we recently spent a long weekend near Northampton with friends. Whilst there we visited Bletchley Park and wow what an interesting place and story about how they broke codes in the second world war. Well worth a visit if you're ever up that way. Oh dear, I just realised at the beginning of this paragraph, I wrote "off the radar", I'm wasted as a bricklayer.

I know we will all wish Dr Lawrence a happy retirement. He is a very clever person and always spoke with terms which even I could understand.

Ok back to my birthday. I will spend the day at Victorious on Southsea Common, listening to groups I've never heard of trying to find some shade. Seeing as I'm 70 now, I'm going to buy myself a first aid kit ! Thought I'd treat myself



Our local Chemist is interviewing farmers for jobs, in the end there were three of them, A, B and C ....Which one got the Job ? Farmer C.

The last two true stories involve me going to fancy dress parties.

The first one saw me dressed as a screwdriver and I can tell you it turned a few heads.

The second was me dressed as a loaf of bread and honestly the birds were all over me.

Gail says – I sooo love Paul's sense of humour, TA lots 'Quiet One'.

If you have pituitary surgery, let's hope it is not like this:

A man is recovering from surgery when the nurse comes and asks how he is feeling.

"I'm OK. But I didn't like the four letter word that the surgeon used in surgery," he replied.

"What did he say?" asked the nurse.

"Oops."

A BIG 'thank you' to Steve Wall for his contribution. Steve says:
Not sure where the following fits in around my storyline but I can tell you that a recent MRI scan has identified an 'incidental' 13mm pituitary tumour.

I've had blood tests following this and that has revealed low testosterone. I've not had any medication or other treatment as yet. My next endocrinology appointment is in October. Sadly, I'm not aware of where this is going to take me, what the course of treatment will be or anything else. That's where the support from this support group is so important to me.

I started at BT Marine division way back in Dec 1977. Started as a cable-hand working in the cable tanks doing that 'walking backwards whilst coiling cable' thing. One big difference was the subsea cable wasn't a small lightweight optical cable back then, the analogue cables where big and heavy and often had a double layer of armouring for protection and sometimes had a lead sheath as well.
Today, cables with optical fibres are around 30mm in diameter, you'd also be surprised that international cables only have around 48 fibres, the restriction being the size of the equipment needed to boost the signal every 80 kilometres.

BT in those days were also responsible for inland waterways, rivers, lakes and lochs. In these scenarios, land type cables were adapted for marine use and big heavy, lead sheathed, copper pair cables were over armoured and labelled as sub-aquas cable. To coil cables in the tanks back then would require a team of cable gangs that would pass the cable to each other as it was stowed, 'man', it was hard physical work and most of the cable turned over from stock to the vessels was not new; at the end of the shift you would have to shower and change having resembled somebody that looked like he had been in a coal mine all day, mainly caused by the aging jutes and bitumen that covered the outer armour wires.

The characters I've met over the years and the stories behind them has been a pleasure to recall. I'll never forget one of the first guys I met. Paul was a charmer with the ladies and a softly-spoken gent that always had an amusing weekend to tell you about on a Monday morning. One Monday Paul didn't turn up for work, but the police did and started to interview us one by one about him, turns out that over the weekend he held up a Post Office with a sawn-off shot gun!! You could not make that up; to meet and chat with him, you'd never expect that.

Then there was Chicken George who made the best curries I'd ever eaten, I miss him. Ron the Van, the obsessive-compulsive gambler, Malcom who would bring his pet budgie called Joey to work because he thought he was lonely, Cannonball Keith who would destroy anything in his path whilst driving a forklift, Roger the Kite because he was always high on something, Jack the Spiv would always try to sell you something knocked off from somewhere. I can think of hundreds of stories over the years, best days of my life.

During my early days as a Tank Rat (a name given to us by the office workers) I noticed that the cable jointers were not getting their hands a dirty as we were and they didn't need to change and shower, their work was more skilled and technical in a much cleaner environment and to top it all they had tea and buttered toast for morning tea break!

I wanted some of that so I requested a cable jointing course, didn't hear any more about that request for months until one of the jointers on part 2 of a training course went off sick. I was offered his spot and I went for it. Being part 2 of the training threw me in the deep end. The 2 parts were 6 weeks each, so I was 6 weeks behind everyone else. Made it through with credit. Returning for part one was a walk in the park. Had several years as a part of the jointing team, shipboard and overland work on rivers, lakes and lochs.

Eventually took up the role of a qualified cable jointing instructor after some BT instructor training courses somewhere in the Midlands, and this was at a time when the industry and the world of communications would change forever. Analogue cables were obsolete or obsolescent and optical cables were bringing in a new era. We didn't know it at the time, but the internet was in conception, we had the task of integrating it.

I look back today and try to remember what the world was like before the internet explosion. We never had mobile phones, laptops, streaming TV etc etc.

I take great pride in watching live Grand Prix racing from Singapore as I was the guy that spliced the subsea fibres to the land section cables on the international routes.
Everything is transmitted around the world in these tiny glass fibres that are thinner than a human hair.

Next time you watch live TV from elsewhere in the world just stop and think for a second about how it all works !!

Amazing technology and now everyone wants AI at lightning speed

Plants

One of our members has asked me to say that she loves growing plants and giving them away so if anyone has any plant pots that they don't now use please bring them to our next meeting on 26th September. And, possibly expect a plant or two in our raffle, excellent.

For information, Kathryn Pearce, who did the tai chi session in Portchester in June, runs two gardening swap shops every month with the university of the third age (U3A). Gardeners get together and exchange plants, seeds, plant pots, ideas, and so on. All over tea and biscuits. Her first group was so popular, she had to start a second group.

If you're feeling lonely or just fancy a chat, then give Gail a call on either of the numbers shown on the first page. Stay safe and thanks soooo very much for your personal contributions folks.

Gail, Pam, Howard P, Melissa, Jodie, Jenny, Jackie, Eireen & Howard C