



May 2019 Newsletter

Providing a supportive and informative environment for people with a variety of lung conditions and their carers.

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NEXT MEETING: Thursday 9 May 2019
10:15 am - 12 noon
Weston Creek Labor Club
Teesdale Close
Stirling ACT 2611

Guest Speaker: Find out everything you need to know about wills and things - Representative from the Office of the Public Trustee.

Dates for your diary

Wednesday 1 May 2019 Fish 'n Chips 12:00 pm Southern Cross Club, Jamison
Thursday 13 June 2019 CLLSG Meeting 10:15 am Weston Creek Labor Club, Stirling

April Meeting

Helen Reynolds

The meeting was well attended with a couple attending who met our members at The Senior's Expo and decided to come along and experience first hand the positives of our group. Topics discussed:

- Interaction with the physiotherapy students at the University of Canberra was a valuable two way street. See later to find out why.
- Lung Foundation Australia's National Lung Health Consumer Seminar was not as well attended as in previous years, perhaps a reflection on the topics which we had covered with guest speakers at our regular meetings. See the Reports later in the Newsletter.
- Next year our support group will celebrate its 22nd birthday! That is quite an achievement. We hope to make it an extra special event. The date will be sometime in February 2020 so we have time to organise everything. John Morley has volunteered to be the organiser and I know he would love to hear from you with your ideas as to the way we can best celebrate this event. *How time flies! Some have suggested we may be even older. Some research is needed to determine just how old we will be if our calculations on this matter are not correct.*

- Seniors' Expo 2020 will be held 21 March 2020. We have booked and paid for a space.
- Musical Interlude featuring Jo on flute, Peter on vocal and Chris on the dance floor was very well received by the meeting. More about it in the next Newsletter.

Colds

Helen Reynolds

Everyone has experienced the “common cold”. It remains the most prevalent contagious disease in the country, is the most cited reason for absence from school or work, and the commonest reason people visit the doctor.

How do you catch a cold?

A virus spread by another infected person, often through sneezing or coughing, causes colds. Lots of things can increase your chances of catching a cold including:

- being indoors during the colder months when people are closer together
- closed windows and lack of fresh air
- poor hygiene and lack of hand washing
- fatigue and poor health
- some indoor air pollutants
- stress.

Symptoms

Cold symptoms usually appear one to four days after the virus enters your body. Symptoms include:

- itchy or sore throat
- stuffy blocked nose
- sneezing
- watery eyes
- husky voice
- muscle aches and pains
- headache
- fever occurs in children but is rare in adults.

Most colds will clear up in a week or so. However, you can spread a cold to others even before any symptoms appear.

The evidence for flu vaccinations is overwhelming. There's no doubt that our patients with COPD have further deterioration in their condition when they have any sort of intercurrent infection. These often precipitate exacerbation of their disease. The most common thing to do this is viral infections rather than bacterial infections. And during the winter months, we're certainly all aware of the severity of an influenza infection in a susceptible population. The flu vaccination seems to be well tolerated and also very effective. Not, like all vaccinations, clearly not totally effective, but certainly it is effective if in not totally preventing the disease then, at least, reducing the severity. And if one thinks of the deleterious effects of influenza on a person with COPD, then, clearly if we can reduce the incidence, that's got to be a value. Dr Mark Hurwitz

Source: <http://healthshare.com.au/questions/46388-why-is-it-recommended-that-copd-patients-have-flu-shots/>

Attention!!!

It's time for that annual visit to your GP.

Be brave.

Your flu injection will not hurt for long.

Promise!

National Lung Health Consumer Seminar Canberra, ACT Helen Reynolds

After welcoming the group to the 2019 National Lung Health Consumer Seminar run by Lung Foundation Australia, Amanda Moles handed the event over to Rati Venkatesh and Amanda Kourtis, pharmacists from the Capital Chemist in Charnwood.

Inhaler devices, medicines and interactions



Rati Venkatesh



Amanda Kourtis

The two pharmacists explained the importance of following instructions when using our medicines and inhalers. They discussed the use of over the counter medicines and the possible effects when using them with prescribed medicines. When in doubt seek advice from your pharmacists. They are a fount of information on all things medical.

Taking control of our health is something we all should do. One

way of doing this is to ask questions of our health providers and continue asking questions until we understand. For example:

- How often do I take this medicine?
- What should I do if miss a dose?
- Is there anything I should avoid (eg sunlight)?
- Does it interact with herbs, vitamins or foods?
- Will medication interact with other scripts or over- the-counter medicines?
- What side effects should I watch out for?
- What should I do if I have a reaction?

Spacers

- Can be as effective as a nebuliser.
- 80% more medicine where you want it.
- Fewer side effects.
- Good maintenance is vital.



RUM - Return Unwanted Medicines to your pharmacist.

Long Term Oxygen Therapy

Dr Mark Hurwitz, Clinical Associate Professor
Australian National University Medical School
Helen Reynolds

If you have been prescribed oxygen therapy, then the sooner you start it the better. Oxygen therapy is designed to increase your life expectancy by delivering more oxygen to your vital organs which may then help your body to function better. Reduced oxygen may cause the body to produce more red blood cells. Sometimes this thickens the blood (a condition called polycythemia) making it harder for the heart to pump the blood around the body. Oxygen therapy can help reduce this strain on your heart, lowering your risk of heart failure.

Long Term Oxygen Therapy also improves cardiovascular mortality as well as:

- quality of life
- depression
- cognitive function
- exercise and
- hospitalisation - frequency of admission.

**"You can never say never.
You can never say always."
Dr Mark Hurwitz**

Things every home oxygen user should know!

Oxygen therapy can help.

Some people with lung diseases do not get enough oxygen into their blood. Low levels of blood oxygen means that vital organs are being deprived of oxygen, and, over time, this can cause damage. Tests are used to determine the amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood as well as blood oxygen saturation. Home oxygen therapy can help those with confirmed low blood oxygen by ensuring enough oxygen gets to vital organs. In some cases, home oxygen therapy can also make everyday life easier and more enjoyable.

Regular medical reviews are vital.

It is important to have your oxygen prescription checked by a respiratory specialist at least once a year. Or, if you feel your condition has changed, make an appointment to see your specialist earlier. *Do not adjust your oxygen flow rate on your own.*

Oxygen does not always relieve breathlessness.

There are many reasons why people have trouble breathing. Home oxygen therapy may relieve shortness of breath for some people but for many, it does not. Sometimes you need a combination of therapies to relieve breathlessness. Ask your doctor or respiratory nurse to fully explain the benefits you can expect from oxygen.

Oxygen is not addictive.

Home oxygen therapy is not addictive and it will not weaken your lungs. You will get maximum benefit by using oxygen for the amount of time prescribed by your doctor.

There is a range of oxygen equipment available.

There are three main types of oxygen equipment used in Australia. The oxygen concentrator and portable oxygen concentrator (POC) which filter nitrogen out of the air to deliver almost pure oxygen

and gas cylinders filled with oxygen which are also widely used and come in a range of sizes. The smaller cylinders are light enough to take with you when leaving the house and often go by the name *portable cylinders*.

Some oxygen equipment is funded.

In the ACT many home oxygen users will qualify for government funded equipment such as the oxygen concentrator and some cylinders. Qualifying rules are different in every state. If you need extra equipment eg a portable concentrator, you can purchase or hire it from an oxygen supplier. Equipment checklists can be found on-line at <http://lungfoundation.com.au>.

Oxygen is safe to use but can make things burn more intensely.

Do not put yourself or your oxygen equipment near any sources of extreme heat, flames, or something that could cause a spark, including a lit cigarette. A study in the US has shown that smoking is by far the largest cause of serious burns in people using home oxygen.

Continue on with everyday life.

Although it may take a while to get used to your oxygen equipment, try to continue with your normal routines as much as possible. Many people do not need to use their oxygen on trips outside the home. For those who do, feelings of self-consciousness about using oxygen equipment in public are usually short lived. Once your confidence improves, the benefits should start to outweigh any downside.

Avoid smoking and being around smokers.

Cigarette smoke is very damaging to the lungs. Quitting smoking is the single most effective thing you can do to help your condition. It is also important to avoid other people's cigarette smoke.

Keeping active is good for your health.

Regular physical activity is very important for those with lung disease to help you perform activities of daily living more easily. Activity does not need to be strenuous. Good activities include walking the dog, an outing, or even just doing jobs around the house. A pulmonary rehabilitation program can also teach you how to exercise more easily. For information on a program near you, ask your GP or specialist.

Travelling with oxygen equipment is possible but requires planning.

Some of the things to check before booking a trip are:

- How to correctly transport your equipment;
- Whether you can use your portable oxygen during the journey; and
- How to arrange an oxygen supply at your destination.
- You may also need a letter from your doctor stating that you are fit to travel.

Plan what to do in an emergency, such as a power blackout.

The most important thing to remember is to try to remain calm and not panic. Although losing power will be annoying, most oxygen users (even those on oxygen for 16 hours a day or more) are safe without their oxygen supply for many hours, if they rest. Call an ambulance if you are in need of urgent assistance.

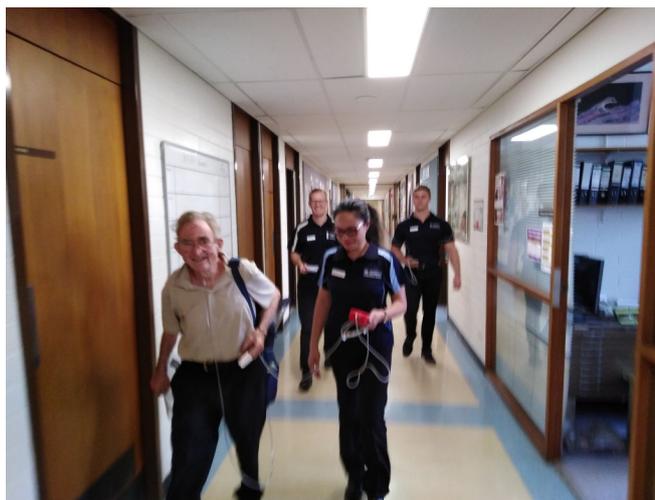
Doing our bit

Helen Reynolds

As in the past we were met by the students and escorted upstairs where we were assigned to a most welcoming group of students. As you can see by the big smiles on the faces of both students and **Sharon** everyone is having a good time.

Everyone had a job to do and it wasn't long before the things were moving along like a well oiled machine. The educational side of the occasion:

- numerous questions relating to our lung conditions - asked and answers recorded
- stethoscopes came out and our lungs performed on cue, some more noisily than others
- some of us had our lungs tested with a spirometer
- blood pressure was taken before and after exercise
- oxygen saturation levels were measured and, of course.
- time for just socialising.



Then it was out into the corridor for the dreaded six minute walk, our exercise for the day. Not all of us managed this but we tried because there was no pressure to perform and the students were so supportive and encouraging. When a group of young people tell you how wonderful you are that does wonders for your sense of self and your ability to perform.

Feedback from the students lets us know how pleased they are that we come. They see for themselves people with a chronic condition and come to better understand how that condition

impacts on our quality of life. The Physio students realise this knowledge/experience is so valuable for their future work. They showed their appreciation by presenting the participants with a huge tin of chocolates. This in turn was most appreciated.

Thanks to Pam for once again organising this worthwhile activity. The students report that it's very helpful for them to interact with patients, each with their individual problems and at different points in their condition. For us, as well as the day being a most enjoyable and satisfying experience, we're able to help these future health professionals.

Featuring in the June Newsletter

Palliative Care and Advance Care Planning - National Lung Health Consumer Seminar.

Musical Interlude featuring Jo on flute, Peter on vocal and Chris on the dance floor - carried over from the April Meeting.