

Note of Falkland PPG Open Evening 18th June 2025

1. Welcome and introductions

Adrian (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked the PPG committee for all their hard work. He noted that Martyn Rees, who had produced the briefing notes on digital access to the surgery, had stepped down. However, he welcomed Lisa Bird, (who could not be there that evening), who was joining the committee.

2. Wash Common Community Festival

Bettine (Treasurer) said the Wash Common Community Festival would be on Saturday 27th September.

Any help with setting up, manning or dismantling the stand would be very welcome.

3. Surgery Update

Points made by Mark (Practice Manager) and in discussion:

- The e-consult process seems to be working well. There are two GPs assessing appointment requests, all day, with some sort of response to everyone on the day (even if the appointment isn't until later).
- There had been a suggestion that parking at the Rugby Club was no longer allowed. Mark noted that this had always been done on the basis of a tacit understanding.
- The increase in employers' national insurance had cost thousands of pounds but it had been possible to absorb it without any redundancies.
- There are 15 Patients Services Advisors (what used to be called receptionists), many of whom answer the phones, upstairs.
- For anyone having physiotherapy at Strawberry Hill, there are steps to reach the room, which had proved difficult for people with knee problems.
- Consideration was being given to providing the health services to meet increased demand from the various housing developments in the local area. Eastfield were due to be opening a new building behind Newbury College, which was designed to be future-proofed, able to provide for 27,000 patients.

4. Live Longer and Healthier – Talk by Dr Tallini

There is a lot of information out there, but not all of it reliable, particularly when people are trying to sell you things. There is often little or no evidence for expensive treatments being peddled, but the simple basics are very worthwhile.

Breathe

- Aim for long, slow, deep, nasal breathing which can help reduce stress.
- Conversely, stress can lead to quick, shallow breathing, which leads to more stress, in a vicious cycle.

Sleep

- Good sleep comes from what you have done in the rest of the day, in relation to things like caffeine, alcohol, getting the body tired and not eating too late.
- When it comes to bedtime, you can just relax.
- If you can't fall asleep or if you wake up in the night, try not to worry about it: worrying will keep you awake even longer.

Eat and drink

- Again, don't worry or feel guilty about food. You can eat healthily but still enjoy your food. Try small changes, a bit at a time. Remarkably quickly, you will be surprised how sweet or salty your old diet then seems.
- Aim for most of the plate to be plant based, with a little bit of carbohydrates and a good amount of protein (e.g. from pulses). Try to avoid ultra-processed food if possible.
- Eat within a 12 hour window (e.g. nothing between 7 at night and 7 in the morning). (There is also evidence for a 16 hour window, or the 5:2 arrangement of limited input on two days of the week, but these are harder to do.)
- Being active (e.g. going for a walk, moving around the house) in the hour after a meal helps reduce peak blood sugar. That helps the body become less insulin resistant.

Move

- Being sedentary is not the norm and isn't as restful as it seems.
- Do movement that you enjoy (whether walking, sports, dancing, yoga or whatever) – don't make it a penance!

Connect

- With those around you.
- With animals and other living things.
- With nature.
- This has been shown to be good for your mental as well as physical health (and the two are intertwined)

Live

- Live according to your values – becoming the authentic you.
- Be open and keep learning.
- Have purpose.
- We shouldn't define ourselves by our addictions.
- Health is there to support us to live the lives we want to live.

Monitoring and interpretation

- There is a lot of tech out there, such as continuous glucose monitors, smart watches and sleep rings.
- If you have particular conditions, you might be advised to use some of this (e.g. glucose monitoring for diabetes).
- However, for most people it is not necessary, it can lead to a superfluity of data and risks obsessive focusing on a few, measurable things, at the expense of the bigger picture.

Supplements

- There is a big market for supplements, so a risk of being sold to
- You can take too many vitamins. There is information on NHS websites on the appropriate amounts to take.
- Most people don't need most supplements most of the time. You are better getting the necessary nutrients from food. But ...
- In this country, in winter, it can be hard to get enough vitamin D from your diet or sun, so pills can help.
- If you have a particular deficiency you may be advised to have, or be prescribed, certain supplements (e.g. vitamin B12 and folate).

Hi tech treatments

There is no evidence for the benefits of such things as:

- Hyperbaric Oxygen
- Intravenous vitamins
- Rapamycin

Health coaching

- You might find health coaching helpful if you are otherwise unable to change your habits.

Further questions and discussion

- Isn't it the case that countries which have a lot of people living to an older age, still consume high amounts of carbohydrates (e.g. rice in Japan, pasta in Italy)? Yes, health outcomes are not determined by just one single thing.
- If you're going to have chocolate, choosing options that are about 90% chocolate, 10% sugar, aren't so bad as many common chocolate bars (which could be around 55% sugar).
- A number of courses are available at Northcroft to help you get fitter
- There's a lot of exercise you can build in to your everyday routine (like calf raises while washing up, parking further away and carrying the shopping back to the car, etc.).