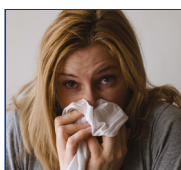




Newsletter of the Cardiac & Respiratory Support Service



Congrats  
Catherine!



Flu jab



World  
COPD Day



## The GCRA+ Story

**Robert Paton, Chairman of the Grampian Cardiac Rehabilitation Association (GCRA) tells us about how a group of people with a heart condition took back control of their health, and developed a service that has been benefitting others for the past 15 years!**

In June 2001 NHS Grampian stopped delivering Phase IV Cardiac Rehabilitation Exercise Classes. These are the classes that people can go to help maintain the benefits they have gained through NHS cardiac rehabilitation. The plan was to train up exercise instructors to British Association of Cardiac Rehabilitation (BACR) levels and let the local authorities run the classes. The training happened but the local authorities did not take up the challenge. Three members of the previous exercise classes (later dubbed the three old fogies in a debate in the Scottish Parliament!) decided that they would take up the challenge. They got a local MSP and the Chair of the Local Health Council on board and were given the go ahead to run the classes. The inaugural meeting of the association took place in June 2002 one year after the closure of the original classes.

GCRA started with two classes in Turriff and Inverurie, expanding as we could over the following years, into as many communities as possible throughout the region. We also:

- Designed our own GP referral protocol
- Became a charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee
- Built a relationship with Robert Gordon University

- Funded three BACPR courses to increase the number of qualified instructors available to us, and
- Affiliated GCRA with CHSS.

In 2015 we trialed two multi-condition classes as part of the Active for Life project set up by NHS Grampian. This, and the fact that a high number of our members were living with more than one long term lung condition, led us to open our classes up to patients with other long term health conditions such as asthma and COPD. We also decided to allow people to self-referral to the classes using a questionnaire to inform the instructor about the health of the applicant. We changed our logo to GCRA+ to make us more inclusive.

GCRA+ has now just under 800 members, runs 41 classes throughout the region, had an estimated 2000 members over the 15 years we have existed, not bad for a small charity started by three old fogies.

**Robert Paton, Chairman GCRA**

For more information about GCRA+ classes in your area contact/go to [www.gcra.org.uk](http://www.gcra.org.uk)

For information on other exercise and support groups across Scotland please call our Advice Line Nurses.

## TAKE A BREATH IS CHANGING

This will be the last printed edition of *Take a Breath* that Chest Heart & Stroke will be producing for now. But don't worry, the newsletter will still be available for free on our website: [www.chss.org.uk/takeabreath](http://www.chss.org.uk/takeabreath)

Remember you can also sign up for free email alerts to let you know when a new edition is available. You can do this by visiting the webpage or going to [www.chss.org.uk/tab-subscribe](http://www.chss.org.uk/tab-subscribe)

We won't pass your details on to anybody else, and we'll only get in touch to let you know about the *Take a Breath* newsletter.

## WHAT'S NEW AT CHSS?

### New Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland Chief Executive

There have been a few changes here at CHSS over the past year. The aim of these being to ensure sustainable and high quality services, while identifying our 'New Ambitions' for the future. We want the charity to be able to meet the needs of the Scottish population more effectively, offering greater support to those living with chest, heart and stroke illness at different stages of their condition journey. Since this time we have experienced several changes including the appointment of our new Chief Executive, Ms Jane-Claire Judson. Ms Judson took up post in November. Before coming to work with CHSS, Ms Judson was the National Director for Diabetes Scotland. She brings a wealth of experience from that role in providing services for people coping with long term conditions.

### CHSS physical activity fund

Being active can help you to live a healthier, longer life. Physical activity is any movement of the body that uses energy and can be as simple as walking, housework or gardening.

This year CHSS created a 'physical activity innovation fund' with the aim of supporting people living with chest, heart and stroke conditions, to be physically active and benefit from improved health and wellbeing. It will provide development grants (money!) that CHSS teams can use to trial (pilot) physical activity programmes. The goal of the Physical Activity Initiative is that people living with these long-term conditions can access and join in with physical activity. The main aims are to ensure local support services are in place, they are easy to

access and join in with, and more people are using them. The pilot programmes can either test new ideas, or support existing services.

To ensure programmes are person-centred, can support people diagnosed with multiple conditions, and focusses on supporting people in their communities, we are seeking patient/ public involvement. If this is something you are interested in and would like further information, please contact Katherine Byrne, Policy Manager, Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland by emailing [katherine.byrne@chss.org.uk](mailto:katherine.byrne@chss.org.uk) or telephoning 0131 225 6963 during working hours (09.00 – 16.30, Monday to Friday).

### Congratulations Catherine!



Well done to respiratory nurse specialist Catherine Bamlett who took on the iconic Forth Rail Bridge Abseil to raise money for the Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland support group 'Grampian Pulmonary Fibrosis'. This unique challenge saw Catherine abseil 165ft, free-fall style like the SAS! Catherine had never abseiled before and she had a great day:

*'The abseil was absolutely fantastic. I'd have done it again straight away, I enjoyed every minute. I had nine supporters who came down with me which made it a real occasion, and also knowing I was doing it for CHSS and our local Support Group made it a very special day indeed'.*

The total raised was £1400 thanks to the generosity of friends, family and colleagues. The Grampian Pulmonary Fibrosis Group is one of Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland's Peer Support Groups. They meet in the Balgownie Bowling Club near the Bridge of Don. The group provides support and information as well as raising awareness about pulmonary fibrosis and has some social activities. They welcome anyone living with pulmonary fibrosis, and their family. Call our Advice Line Nurses to find out more.

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### WORD SEARCH

Can you find the following shows and pantomines?

EVITA

STARLIGHT EXPRESS

CATS

ASPECTS OF LOVE

CINDERELLA

WEST SIDE STORY

SOUTH PACIFIC

SNOW WHITE

Extract from *The Activity Year Book: A Week by Week Guide for Use in Elderly Day and Residential Care* by Anni Bowden and Nancy Lewthwaite, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

## CHEST-A-MINUTE



**I've forgotten to get my flu jag. Do you think it's still worth it?**

Yes! Although 'flu season' often begins in October, there is often an increase in cases between December and February. In fact, Flu can still be about as late as May! It's not too late, you can still get your flu jag from your GP surgery.

**But some people have told me they feel worse afterwards. And I got the jag last year so that should cover me shouldn't it?**

No! Last year's vaccine might not work against this year's bug. You need to get it every year to be sure you are protected. I know some people worry that having the flu jag can end up giving them the flu. This is not true. The flu vaccine is called 'an inactivated injection', this means there is no live virus in the injection. Although you can have some side effects, but they are usually mild and only last a day or two.

**Is there anything I can do to avoid the side effects?**

- ✓ Sore or red areas on your arm can be soothed with a cold cloth.
- ✓ A headache or slight fever is helped by drinking plenty of fluids and taking regular doses of paracetamol (but do not exceed the recommended dose).
- ✓ These symptoms usually disappear within one to two days without any treatment, however if you have increased breathlessness, swelling or a rash in the few days after vaccination contact your doctor or nurse.

## Vitamin D

### What you need to know!

Vitamin D is an important nutrient that is made in our bodies, under our skin when it reacts with UVB rays (sunlight). For most of the year we are able to get enough Vitamin D from sunlight, but what about the winter months? Can you get enough from food alone or should we consider taking supplements?

#### Why do we need Vitamin D?

It keeps our bones, teeth and muscles healthy. Without enough Vitamin D people are at risk of soft bones, bone pain and eventually rickets (weak bones and bone deformities). Recent studies suggest that getting enough Vitamin D may also reduce the severity of asthma attacks (alongside existing asthma treatment). If you suffer from asthma, speak to your GP for more information. If you are low on Vitamin D you may also be more at risk of heart disease and stroke.

#### Where do we get Vitamin D from?

1. 90% of our Vitamin D comes from **sunlight**.
2. It is difficult to get enough Vitamin D from **food** alone, but it can be found in: Oily fish (i.e. salmon, mackerel, sardines and herring); Red meat; Egg yolks; Fortified foods (some fat spreads and breakfast cereals)
3. Vitamin D supplements

#### How much Vitamin D do we need?

Most adults need 10 micrograms of Vitamin D every day (this might be written as 10mcg or 10µg). If presented as 'international units' (IU)

you would need 400IU.

#### Do I need to take a supplement?

Most adults should get enough Vitamin D from sunlight between March and September. However, outside of these months (October-February) it is recommended that all adults and children over 1 year old should consider taking a supplement.

Some people are at higher risk of low Vitamin D levels, for example:

- People in care homes or those who rarely get outdoors
- People who cover up their skin when they are outdoors
- People with darker skin might not get as much Vitamin D from sunlight, even in the summer months (e.g. people from African, African-Caribbean or South Asian backgrounds).

If you think this might be you, consider discussing taking a supplement all year round with your GP. If you take other supplements, make sure that you aren't getting extra doses of Vitamin D (i.e. in a multivitamin or cod liver oil) as more than 100mcg per day could be harmful.

*Always seek medical advice before starting a new supplement or medication.*



# World COPD Day comes around again!

Each year World COPD Day takes place as a means of raising awareness of this condition. In Scotland there are over 129,000 people who are diagnosed as having Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. There are over 17,000 people diagnosed with COPD in Lanarkshire, higher than the Scottish average.

It is estimated that only 1/3 of people know that they have COPD and so many more may be living with the symptoms but are unaware of the condition and are not getting the support & treatment they need.

Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland is here to help support people in Scotland who are living with COPD to learn about the services and treatments available as well as supporting people to come together to learn from each other.

Here one of our groups share what helps them to live well with COPD. This includes “taking medication on a regular basis”, “exercising”, “stopping smoking” and “managing medication”. What helps you to live well with COPD?

As well as supporting local events, this year CHSS was also at the Scottish Parliament, bringing MSPs' attention to the impact of COPD. They heard personal stories about living with COPD, and experienced an insight to what it's like to breathe with COPD as well as the opportunity to



join in with one of our singing support groups. All of this is to highlight the need for improved support & services for people living with COPD in Scotland.

## Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF) Week

In September we also used IPF week to highlight some of the issues faced by people living with some of the less common lung conditions. As well as raising awareness through social media, we were able to support discussions at the Cross Party Group for Lung Health. These covered IPF and bronchiectasis among others. Mostyn Tuckwell from the Edinburgh based CHSS support group 'Breathtakers Action for Bronchiectasis' gave an excellent talk on what it's like to live with Bronchiectasis. He also spoke about the Breathtakers group, highlighting the benefits people got

from attending their meetings where there is a mix of health information and time for socialising and offering support. We also heard about the very effective 'clinic table'. This is where members of the group take it in turns to be available at Bronchiectasis clinics at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. The group members are able to provide information, advice and support to people who have just received their diagnosis, and invite them along to the group. It was felt that this type of group could work well across different parts of the country, and for different health conditions. Well done Mostyn!

## Have Your Say!

Do you have any new information about services in your area, an interesting story or a helpful hint to share with people affected by chronic lung disease? Then please let us know so that we can share it with others. We'd love to hear from you:

Contact us by e-mail on [respiratoryservices@chss.org.uk](mailto:respiratoryservices@chss.org.uk) Or call us on 0131 225 6963

We look forward to hearing your news!