

# MSK NEWS SUMMER 2017

MSK, RHEUMATOLOGY AND PAIN  
MANAGEMENT PROVISION IN HIGH  
WEALD, LEWES, HAVENS AND  
EASTBOURNE, HAILSHAM AND  
SEAFORD



## Welcome to our summer newsletter

Since April this year, Sussex MSK Partnership East (SMSKPE) has managed more than 6,000 referrals. This includes 2,360 Extended Scope Practitioner appointments and 472 with consultants in our community clinics in Eastbourne, Seaford, Peacehaven, Crowborough and Hailsham.

We have been consolidating our growth and continuing the roll out of services and activities, including self-referral and the pain service. We've also recruited a team of patient partners who are working with us to help improve the experience for patients who are referred to SMSKPE. You can read more about these initiatives in this newsletter.

We also feature two patients' stories and their differing decisions about whether or not to undergo surgery: Edward Wolfe who decided after many years of pain to have a hip replacement; and the remarkable story of Stephen Rigby who follows a rigorous exercise regime which has helped him avoid spinal surgery.

Extended Scope Practitioner Steve Daly and Physiotherapist Andy Lord, our Quality, Safety and Improvement Manager, have been in the media recently giving advice on avoiding tennis injuries (Steve) and back problems at work (Andy). See what they have to say in their articles below.

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**We are always happy to hear what you think, so please get in contact if you have a comment to share.**

If you would like to get in touch with us please

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You can find out more about us on [www.sussexmskpartnershipeast.co.uk](http://www.sussexmskpartnershipeast.co.uk)

## Self-referral pilots underway

**In April 2017, Sussex MSK Partnership East (SMSKPE) began a self-referral pilot with The Lighthouse Medical Practice and Buxted Medical Centre. Since then, SMSKPE has received more than 320 self-referrals.**

Despite broadening access, SMSKPE has not seen an increase in referrals - it has actually seen fewer.

Self-referral presents patients with the opportunity to provide a detailed account of their problem and tell SMSKPE exactly what matters to them. With a better understanding of patients' problems at the point of referral, patients can be directed more effectively to the service best suited to their needs.

The details we are receiving simply would not be possible through traditional GP referrals owing to time constraints on appointments. We're finding GPs are saving time through not having to write referrals themselves and this means more time caring for the patient in front of them.



A full evaluation of the impact of self-referral is currently underway and the findings will help SMSKPE to decide whether to expand self-referral to other GP practices in East Sussex.

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## Launch of the Patient Partner Pioneers

**Patient forums are now well established and held regularly around the SMSKPE area. With more than 250 attendees to date and many thousands of patient reported experience measures (PREMS) questionnaires returned, we are reaching a high level of patient consultation.**

In this third year of the service, we are aiming to increase levels of patient participation through more active involvement. In April, the patient director and three patients from Eastbourne and Heathfield attended the first Patient Partners planning day.



Held at SMSKP Central, this brought together a small group of patients who want to give something back and contribute to improving the quality of the service.

The interactive day covered the role of patients as partners, the planning of activities and opportunities, and identifying training and support.

The word 'partners' was considered important so that these patients were not seen as representing thousands of others, but working as collaborators through sharing their own life experiences.

Our patient partners chose to name themselves Patient Partner Pioneers and two have already taken part in planning for the physiotherapy improvement pathway.

Since April, another patient has also volunteered to become more involved, bringing the total to four.

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## More support needed for unpaid carers

**Carers' Week took place in June to highlight the role of the estimated seven million carers in the UK. The aim was to help communities and organisations to offer support to carers.**

Care for the Carers (CFTC) provides support for carers in East Sussex. Strategic Partnerships Manager, Teresa Flower, said: "A carer is anyone

who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.



"Here in East Sussex there are around 60,000 unpaid carers, many of whom may be facing challenges such as stress, anxiety, loneliness and financial difficulties. Carers are also more likely to neglect their own health and wellbeing and so we work with a wide range of services, such as Sussex MSK Partnership East, who have contact with carers," Teresa added.

Sussex MSK Partnership East joined forces with CFTC to encourage carers to seek support if they need it (pictured left). The Patient Care Advisors, who are the first point of contact for patients, are trained to identify carers and can refer them for support.

## Patient story: Edward Wolfe

**Edward Wolfe, 65, is a retired builder who lives in Eastbourne. For the past 10 years he has been troubled with a painful hip caused by osteoarthritis.**

He used to be very active, doing a physical job and walking and cycling in his spare time. But as time went on he has been able to do less and less and eventually had to retire from his work.

About five years ago Mr Wolfe (pictured right) was offered a hip replacement but felt that he would prefer to try and manage the pain and keep active. His GP supported his decision to self-manage and agreed that they would regularly review him.

Mr Wolfe managed well up until recently but is now getting more pain and having difficulty walking. His GP referred him to Sussex MSK Partnership East's Extended Scope Practitioner Matt Daly at the community clinic in Wartling Road, Eastbourne.

"It was a really good experience and so convenient: the appointment was just around the corner from my house, there was no waiting and everyone treated me with courtesy and respect.

"Matt Daly explained what was wrong with me and why the pain was getting worse in such a straightforward way that I learned more about my

condition in 10 minutes than I had in 10 years.

"We talked about the options available, including hip replacement. He explained the pros and cons and that helped me decide that a new hip would be best.

"I have managed pretty well for 10 years, all things considered, but I'm rapidly losing my mobility. Thanks to Mr Daly I feel reassured that I understand what choices I have and that I am making the right decision," he added.



Mr Wolfe is now looking forward to getting back to the more active life he once enjoyed. "I like to be outside and although I can't walk very far at the moment my wife and I still take our dog, Freddie, out every day.

"I'm hoping my new hip will give us the freedom to go for longer walks, shopping trips and days out - none of which are possible at the moment," he said.

## Tempted by tennis? Here are some tips...

With tennis tournaments in both Eastbourne and Wimbledon taking place as usual this summer, people will be tempted to pick up a racquet to get fit. It's a great exercise for all ages, but if you've never played, or it's been a while since you last played, Steve Daly, Extended Scope Practitioner, has provided some tips to help you get to grips with the sport and avoid injury.

### Warm up and start off slowly

As with any form of exercise or sport, it's important to warm up your body gradually. Starting off gently gets the blood pumping to your muscles, increasing the flow of oxygen and preparing them for activity.

This is particularly important for a sport like tennis which involves lots of sprinting, leaping, stretching and pivoting. These abrupt movements put a lot of sudden and unaccustomed pressure on muscles and ligaments and can cause the tissues to tear, but muscles that are warmed-up are more pliable and therefore less prone to injury.

Tennis elbow is the injury everyone's heard of but elbows are not the only tennis injury. Ankles, knees, shoulders and wrists are all prone to injury if not warmed up properly. It's important to do some gentle stretches to the muscles around all of these joints and also practice things like hopping and jumping from one foot to the other to test your balance and warm up your legs.



### Don't over-do it

Over-doing it on your first game may mean it is also your last. If you are tired you are more likely to lose focus and co-ordination making you more prone to hurting yourself.

### Wear the correct shoes

It's essential to wear good quality trainers. They don't need to be expensive or even specially for tennis



but they should fit properly, and be supportive and cushioned to help protect your joints from the impact of running and jumping. And don't forget to tie them securely – a surprising number of injuries are caused by tripping over laces!

### Keep hydrated

Our bodies don't work without water: its functions include cooling us down, assisting blood flow and lubricating the joints with synovial fluid. You will lose a significant amount of water during a game of tennis so make sure you have had plenty to drink before you start playing and have a bottle or two of water courtside so that you can top up regularly.

### Hone your technique

Although a lot of fun can be had knocking a few balls around the local courts, you might want to consider refreshing your racquet skills with the help of a tennis coach. Playing with good technique means less risk of injury and a few lessons will do wonders for your confidence too.

### After the game

After doing any exercise it's important to warm down and manage any problems that may have occurred. Repeating the gentle stretches you did at the beginning, ensuring you are well hydrated and applying ice to any niggles that you have developed should help prevent any minor injuries getting worse.

Ice should be applied through a damp cloth and not directly to the skin and left over the sore spot for 10 minutes at a time.

You may feel sorer the day after exercise, but this is normal. If your pain is severe or doesn't go away after a few days of gentle stretching, it may be worth speaking to your GP to get some further advice or a referral to physiotherapy. Any form of exercise is good for you, so it is worth persisting if you enjoyed it.

## Pain service update

**The aim of the pain service is to provide advice, guidance and support for patients with persistent pain who are struggling to manage or are experiencing significant difficulties or distress.**

Sussex MSK Partnership East (SMSKPE) provides a number of options, including a pain management programme, patient information sessions, individual therapy and couple/family therapy.

It has been a busy period for recruitment of staff to the service. In May and June, two occupational therapists and two clinical psychologists joined the team. Interviews are being held for six physiotherapy posts and another clinical psychology post in the next few weeks. Once the team is fully staffed there will be 15 clinicians in total.

As the staff team is growing, the pain service is able to offer a greater range of clinical options to patients, including psychological therapy, pain information

group sessions and groups supporting self-management for those patients who have previously attended pain management programmes.

We will soon be able to offer sessions with occupational therapists for patients needing support to stay in work or return to work.

For further information, please visit the pain section of our website at

[www.sussexmskpartnershipeast.co.uk/pain](http://www.sussexmskpartnershipeast.co.uk/pain)

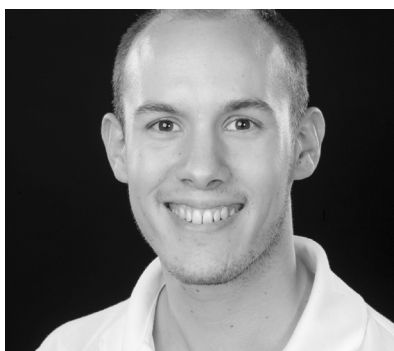


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## How to create a healthier workplace (as seen in Sussex Business Times)

**Every year 9.5 billion work days in the UK are lost owing to staff illness. The impact on productivity is huge - it's estimated that sick days cost the economy around £14 billion a year and if you are a small business, the absence of a staff member can impact on productivity and morale.**

However there is a lot of evidence to suggest that you can reduce sick days by building a healthier work place. A key element of this is encouraging your staff to be more active, but for people doing a sedentary job, this can be easier said than done.



**Andy Lord (pictured above) is a Chartered Physiotherapist and Quality, Safety and Improvement Manager with Sussex MSK Partnership East**

Here are a few ideas to create a health conscious work place and boost the wellbeing of your employees:

1. Introduce a cycle to work scheme – there are tax incentives available for employers who buy bicycles for their employees.
2. Put a ban on lunching at your desk – if employees have to take a lunch break then they are more likely to leave the office, go for a walk and come back energised for the afternoon.
3. Encourage movement. Get up and go and talk to a colleague rather than call or email them. If your staff see the boss doing it then they are more likely to follow suit.
4. If possible, install a shower and changing facilities so that people can cycle or run to work.
5. Use exercise as a team building activity. Enter a team into a race or do a sponsored walk to raise money for charity.



## How exercise saved me from surgery, by Stephen Rigby

**Stephen Rigby, 51, is a Company Director who lives near Lewes. He tells us how he avoided having major surgery on his back by following treatments and a simple fitness and strengthening regime.**



"I'd been having spells of back pain for a while. Although I've played a lot of sports throughout my life, my job means I have spent years sitting at a desk. I think the combination of old injuries and long bouts of inactivity were contributing factors.

"It was while I was on holiday that the pain became really acute after climbing steps carrying a back pack. The pain was so intense – my natural instinct was to protect my back and I tried to move as little as possible because it hurt when I had to walk. Even sitting for short periods was really painful and I had to use anti-inflammatory and pain relief drugs to be able to even stand up. I knew that while they helped temporarily, they weren't a long term 'fix'.

"On my return home it had not improved and I didn't want to keep using drugs. I booked a private MRI scan in the hope that it would identify what was wrong. The investigation showed I had two herniated discs in my spine. An orthopaedic surgeon said he was amazed I could even walk but said that the most acute of them could be surgically repaired. A surgery date was set but I was reluctant to have surgery unless it was the last resort, because I had heard that strengthening and proper exercise can often be better.

"So in between times I saw a physiotherapist who gave me exercises to help relieve the pain, a

cranio-sacral osteopath who helped to 'straighten me up', as I was by then quite twisted from the months trying to compensate for the pain I was in. Lastly I went to see a fitness coach who gave me simple but specific exercises to strengthen my core muscles and help take some pressure off my discs and support my back.

"It may sound complicated but really it wasn't. It was logical and simple and let my body sort itself out and relieve the pain, without drugs.

"Doing the exercises initially was pretty uncomfortable, and I felt nervous about causing further damage, but all the clinicians assured me that my back was strong and I wouldn't make the problem worse by moving and gently building up the exercise.

"I've been doing my exercises every day and the results have been dramatic. I get the odd twinge but by and large I am pain free and so much more mobile. The extent of my recovery was brought home to me when I took a long haul flight. I was comfortable throughout several hours in an aeroplane, not to mention boat trips, swimming, walking and climbing.

"I exercise daily and have now been assessed and told that surgery is no longer needed. That is exactly the result I wanted. I feel better than I have for months but it has been quite a journey. Constant pain is extremely mentally debilitating and it takes a lot of grit and determination to get moving. When your back hurts, the natural instinct is to protect it, so if movement causes pain, then you try not to move. But I've learnt that the most important thing is to keep mobile – to push yourself little by little.

"There is a lot we can do to help ourselves recover. I don't want to be a patient, have surgery or take pain killers. I want to feel fit and healthy and be able to move properly and do normal things. While it takes effort, exercising has given me the freedom to get my life back to normal, support my family as I used to, travel, play sport and do my job without worrying about being in pain."

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