The online clinic was hosted by NHS Choices and Talkhealth who teamed up with the BTF and with Sense About Science. Talkhealth provides a platform where people can ask questions on current health issues and find trusted information on chronic ailments and health concerns. Its monthly online clinics are run in partnership with NHS Choices and in association with the leading charities within the clinics’ sphere.

The thyroid clinic was online for seven days in January. Questions were responded to by a panel of experts who included:

- **Professor John Lazarus** (Emeritus Professor of Clinical Endocrinology).
- **Dr David Kerbel** (GP with a special interest in hypothyroidism).
- **Dr Graham Beastall** (Clinical Biochemist and currently President of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine).
- **Dianne Wright** (Endocrine Specialist Nurse).
- **Dr Petros Perros** (Consultant Endocrinologist).

Other experts who participated were **Dr Colin Dayan** (Consultant Endocrinologist), **Mr Barney Harrison** (Consultant Endocrine Surgeon), **Dr Tim Cheetham** (Paediatrician with a special interest in Endocrinology), and **Professor Edzard Ernst** (Emeritus Professor of Complementary Medicine).

The clinic was widely promoted beforehand. Posters and newsletters promoting the clinic were sent to around 1,200 GP surgeries, all UK libraries, around 900 Sure Start centres and the event was promoted on the NHS Choices website. The BTF gave details about the event in its January newsletter and on the website. It was also widely promoted via Twitter and Facebook.

Even so, the site traffic and the number of questions considerably exceeded expectations compared with other similar online clinics, according to a representative of Talkhealth who said:

‘At Talkhealth we were absolutely delighted at the participation levels of the clinic. We hope that the concerns that were highlighted in the clinic will progress and promote further awareness to GPs on this condition.’

During the seven days the clinic was open, people asked 777 questions on 190 topics, of which 160 were responded to by the panel of experts. Nearly three-quarters of the questions were on hypothyroidism or some aspect of it. There were also questions about hyperthyroidism, thyroid cancer, and thyroid disease. At times the clinic had to be closed for several hours to give the expert panel a chance to catch up.

The questions revealed that some people have significant frustrations or had issues with their doctor’s attitude or with the medication prescribed, especially for hypothyroidism.

**Janis Hickey**, BTF Director, said: ‘We are very grateful to our panel of experts who were overwhelmed at first by the unexpectedly high volume of questions but who took their role very seriously during the entire week and put in long hours to reply to as many questions as possible.

‘We have learned a lot from the experience. One thing that became clear is how many people feel frustrated in talking with their doctors. We are evaluating the results and hope to talk with the British Thyroid Association and with GP organisations about how we can address these frustrations.’

These amazing butterfly cakes were created by Piece of Cake in Harrogate for the BTF stand at the Harrogate Flower Show, 26-29 April. More news in our next issue!
Richard Bliss
MB, BChir is a Consultant General Surgeon with special interests in endocrine surgery including thyroid, parathyroid, and laparoscopic adrenal surgery. He performs over 100 thyroidectomies each year. Mr Bliss is based at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle upon Tyne where he has worked for 12 years following his training in the North East and Sydney, Australia where he was awarded the T.S. Reeve International Fellowship in Endocrine Surgery by the University of Sydney. He was the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the British Association of Endocrine and Thyroid Surgeons (BAETS) from 2002 to 2008 and is currently on the BAETS Executive Committee. He is also lead thyroid surgeon and Vice-Chair of the thyroid group for the North of England Cancer Network and Clinical Director for Surgical Services at the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Mark Vanderpump
MB ChB MD FRCP is a Consultant Physician and Honorary Senior Lecturer in Diabetes and Endocrinology at the Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust in London. Prior to this he was a Consultant Endocrinologist at the North Middlesex Hospital NHS Trust.

His training in general medicine and endocrinology was completed at posts in the West Midlands, North East England and North Staffordshire.

His main area of expertise is thyroid disease but his clinical practice includes all aspects of diabetes and endocrinology. Mark has published on various aspects of thyroid disease and has served on the Executive Committee of the British Thyroid Association (2002-2008).

Janet Prentice
who is coordinator of our local group in Birmingham and is a BTF telephone contact.

Janet has worked as an insurance underwriter for the past 32 years. She also delivers a Chronic Disease Self-Management Course to patients with long-term health conditions for the Expert Patient Programme CIC.

She was diagnosed with papillary thyroid cancer in February 1994 following a surgical (open) biopsy, and underwent a total thyroidectomy and removal of cancerous lymph nodes (which resulted in permanent hypoparathyroidism), various types of scans, fineneedle aspiration, surgery to remove two suspect nodules (non-cancerous) and radioactive iodine ablation treatment.

David Fortune
who currently helps BTF as an office volunteer and member of the BTF Strategy Group.

David has enjoyed a highly successful and varied career in academia, life sciences, and the pharmaceutical and medical device industries. He held senior positions in Glaxo and Fisons, before founding and managing Affinity Sensors, Tissuemed and Sci-Med. His passions in life are the outdoors (including the Abel Tasman Coastal Track and the Tongariro Crossing in New Zealand, the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu and the Canadian Rockies) and worldwide travel.

Eleanor Temple
who will serve as incoming Treasurer of the Board of Trustees.

Eleanor said: ‘I am delighted to be taking over as Treasurer, though I have some big shoes to fill after Alan! I hope to be able build upon all of his hard work and I am looking forward to my new role.’

Cathryn Perkins
who has joined the BTF as a volunteer.

Before becoming a full-time mum, Cathryn worked in Press and Publicity for the BBC and organised events for the Independent Television Commission (now OFCOM) and Cancer Research Campaign. She is now developing a ‘portfolio career’ as a freelance writer.

Julia Priestley
who has joined the BTF staff after being selected as a winner of the Vodafone World of Difference (WOD) UK programme.

The programme will cover the cost of employing Julia for four months.

The placement began on the first of March.

Julia said: ‘Having volunteered for the BTF since September, I was delighted when I heard about this Vodafone scheme which gives people the chance to work for a charity of their choice. From an initial number of over 8,000 applicants, 500 were successful and placed with an amazing range of charities, big and small, throughout the UK.’

Julia, who currently helps BTF as an insurance underwriter for the Birmingham and South Staffordshire.

‘On 27 February we were invited to Newbury Racecourse for a fantastic induction day where we were motivated, inspired and moved by a number of amazing speakers, such as Gok Wan, Simon Weston and Lisa Potts. There were also workshops on how to blog and tweet about our experiences during the placement. We were left with the impression that we should use the placement as a unique opportunity to use
You can follow Julia’s blog about her work at BTF on her blog: http://worldofdifference.vodafone.co.uk/blogs/julia-priestley/

Judith Taylor and Angela Hammond, who we welcome as incoming Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Judith has been a BTF Trustee since 2009 and edits this newsletter and various patient materials. She also represents the BTF in organisations such as Cancer52 and the Thyroid Cancer Alliance.

Angela joined the Board of Trustees in 2011 and is very familiar with the BTF having worked as a local group coordinator and volunteer telephone contact. She now works as a volunteer one day a week in the BTF office. Angela is a member of Soroptimist International and has held office as Treasurer and President of both her club and her Region. She is also a member of Inner Wheel.

Farewell to…

Carole Ingham, who has completed her term of office as a BTF Trustee and who served as Chair of the Board of Trustees for three years. Carole first became Trustee in 2001. She will continue to run the BTF local group in Bolton.

Alan Menzies, who has stepped down as Treasurer of the Board of Trustees. Alan served as volunteer Treasurer for nearly 20 years since the early days of the BTF.

Alan said: ‘I have enjoyed my 20 years with you all but I am also quite sad to be ending my involvement.’

Dorothy, his wife, added: ‘I know how much Alan has enjoyed his work with the BTF - I don’t know what he is going to do!’

Janis Hickey said: ‘A big thank you to Carole and Alan for all their hard work over the years.’

BTF staff members Donna Reed and Jennifer Lindley, who are both leaving our head office.

Jennifer has been a volunteer in the BTF office since autumn 2009. She has not only been involved in general administration but has played a major role in shaping up the accounts procedure in the office. She has indicated she would like to volunteer on a monthly basis, by coming into the office to give us a hand.

Thanks Jennifer - enjoy your retirement…. but we look forward to seeing you each month!

Jennifer said: ‘It was with much sadness that I decided to hand in my notice with BTF. I had been thinking of retiring for a few months and felt that the time was now right.

‘I have enjoyed the job very much, and am still amazed at how much work is involved with the administration of an organisation such as this. I have also enjoyed talking to the many people who ring us up with requests for information and advice, and hope that I have fulfilled that part of the job satisfactorily.

‘One thing I have learnt from patients and the medical profession alike is that an organisation like ours is a necessary force for providing the help and information thyroid sufferers require.

‘I remember the fabulous walks we’ve had, particularly the Big Summer Walk around Harrogate when five lusty ladies from the BTF office braved the rain in order to raise funds.

‘So I’m feeling a little sad as I write this now - I just hope they don’t think they’ve got rid of me for good. I’ll be back to help as a volunteer, raise funds, or whatever else BTF have in mind. My best wishes to you all.’

Donna said: ‘I just want to express my appreciation to Janis for giving me the opportunity first to volunteer and then to become an employee of the BTF. I have really enjoyed working with Janis, Cheryl, Jennifer and office volunteers, along with volunteers from the medical community that are so vital to BTF. I have learnt a great deal about my illness and about working in a non-profit organisation. BTF makes a difference to people’s lives.’

Janis writes: ‘Jennifer and Donna have both been great people to work with – fun, and team-players. We will miss them! We would like to say a big thank you to both for their help, and particularly for the personal fundraising they have each done for BTF over the past couple of years.’

Harrogate Spring Flower Show

If you were at the Harrogate Flower Show recently you may have seen us there – the BTF had a stand for the first time this year where it exhibited award-winning botanical artist Anna Knights’ beautiful limited edition fine art print ‘Peacock Butterfly on Apple Blossom’. The show ran from 26-29 April and was only just opening as we went to press so there will be news and pictures in the September issue.

Gardening Scotland

The BTF is building a garden during the Gardening Scotland show at Ingliston, near Edinburgh. The garden is being created by volunteers from Dalgety Bay Horticultural Society (DBHS) in Fife, under taking a special interest in the pregnancy and children’s projects in which she has made great headway. Donna also represented BTF at conferences and meetings, and engaged with the local group coordinators, often going to meetings to talk about BTF’s work.

Donna said: ‘I just want to express my appreciation to Janis for giving me the opportunity first to volunteer and then to become an employee of the BTF. I have really enjoyed working with Janis, Cheryl, Jennifer and office volunteers, along with volunteers from the medical community that are so vital to BTF. I have learnt a great deal about my illness and about working in a non-profit organisation. BTF makes a difference to people’s lives.’

Donna Reed and Jenny Lindley, who are both leaving the BTF after joining initially as a volunteer in 2009 due to her husband's job transferring to Germany.
A hare and a tortoise are currently racing each other up the country towards Ingliston to raise awareness for the BTF before the start of Gardening Scotland.

They are making use of Geocaching - a high-tech treasure hunt using GPS satellite technology (e.g. sat-nav, GPS mobile phones). There are likely to be hundreds of hidden treasure boxes in your area, and they can be found by finding the GPS co-ordinates on www.geocaching.com.

Aesop’s Fable about the slow and steady tortoise versus the super-fast hare will be put to the test in an unusual new way, while highlighting the complex conditions of under-active and over-active thyroid.

How does it work? Items like small toys may be placed in hidden geocaches (a.k.a. caches) which may be swapped for another toy. Other trackable items are given a mission to travel from cache to cache and can feasibly travel around the world.

The animal nearest the venue at Ingliston, near Edinburgh on 1 June will be the winner. For more information on geocaching, visit www.geocaching.com where you can track the progress of the hare: http://goo.gl/IEnPp versus the tortoise: http://goo.gl/SiZoS

Silent auction for Anna’s original painting

Anna Knights has very kindly donated her original ‘Peacock Butterfly on Apple Blossom’ painting to raise funds for the BTF.

We will be holding a silent auction for the painting - which took weeks to complete and would normally sell for £2,500 - during May and early June, with the winner announced at Gardening Scotland.

The reserve price is £750. If you are interested, please contact us with your bids by emailing info@btf-thyroid.org or calling 01423 709707 by 12 noon on 30 May 2012. The winner will be announced on 3 June during the Gardening Scotland show.

BTF’s 21st birthday

BTF will be celebrating its 21st birthday in October 2012 and has already organised some special fundraising events to mark the occasion:

17 November 2012: a Ceilidh at the Cairn Hotel, Harrogate with ‘Cobbler’s Wax’.

24 March 2013: a show by Rock Up and Sing, The Royal Hall, Harrogate.

We’ll let you know the details in BTF News and on our website nearer the time.

We are keen to organise other fundraising activities so watch this space. And do let us know if you have any ideas to share about fundraising events to mark BTF’s birthday.

‘Go for the throat’

The BTF is running a crime-writing competition to win a pair of tickets to the Theakstons Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year and Festival Opening Party hosted by BBC Radio 4 Presenter Mark Lawson in Harrogate on Thursday 19 July.

We are looking for crime stories based around the theme ‘Go for the throat’. The panel of judges includes Gill Knox, a novelist based in Harrogate and author of The Legacy of Talents published by Troubador Publishing Ltd, Eileen Robertson author of Miss Maguire is Missing and Blackmail for Beginners, and Neil Harrison, co-producer of the feature film The Spell and author of Chosen.

Submit your crime story (maximum 2,000 words) with the theme ‘Go for the Throat’ on white A4 paper in Times New Roman or Arial 12 point font, double spaced text. Please do not include your name or identifying features on any page except the front header page.

The closing date is 30 June 2012. Winners will be notified before Saturday 14 July 2012. The prize must be taken on Thursday 19 July 2012.

Please note the prize is non-transferable and cannot be exchanged for cash. This prize does not include accommodation or travel.

For more information contact: Cathryn.perkins@tiscali.co.uk on 07808 772992

The Big BTF Summer Walk

After the success of last year’s Big BTF Summer Walk, we are again asking our supporters to get their walking boots on to help us raise money and awareness so we can do more to help people with thyroid disorders.

Everyone can join in and it’s really easy to take part. Just follow the steps below and get walking!

Gather a few friends or family together for a walk (or a run, trek or bike ride) on a lovely day between 21 June and 21 September. Register your walk using the methods below then let everyone you know you are taking part to raise awareness of thyroid conditions and ask them to sponsor you. Then walk your walk!

Let us know you’ve completed the Big BTF Summer Walk and send in your sponsorship money. Send in your photos from the day and we will include them in our Big BTF Summer Walk round-up here and publish a selection in our newsletter.

How to Register

Register your walk with BTF online at www.btf-thyroid.org. Registration involves completing a form and paying the £10

PAGE 4 • BTF News 80
refundable registration fee through PayPal or by credit card.

- Request a registration form by calling the BTF office on 01423 709 707. Fill in the form, sign it, and return it to the BTF office with your £10 refundable registration fee cheque made payable to ‘The British Thyroid Foundation’.

For more information, visit our website.

BTF at BES

In March the BTF attended the British Endocrine Societies (BES) conference organised by the Society for Endocrinology.

This year the conference took place in Harrogate.

This four-day annual meeting is the main UK meeting on hormone research and covers the length and breadth of endocrinology ‘from bench to bedside’, as well as special tailored sessions for nurses and ‘Meet the Expert’ sessions for both clinicians and basic scientists.

Many of the BTF’s medical advisors, trustees and former trustees were at the meeting and it therefore provides important networking opportunities.

CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

The BTF will once again be running its popular competition to design a Christmas card. We have to start now because it takes a few months for the cards to be chosen and printed and they need to go on sale in the autumn.

Anyone who is under 18 can enter.

This year’s theme is ‘Angels’.

**Competition rules**

Use an A3 or A4 piece of white paper (15cm x 21cm).

You can draw anything you want to do with angels, as long as your drawing is your own work.

Use crayons, felt tips, paints, but please don’t stick anything on it, because that won’t work!

Or you can scan your drawing and send it to us as a high-resolution digital image attached to an email (ask someone to help you with this if you’re not sure).

Write the following on the back of your drawing (or include in your email if you are going to email your drawing to us): Your name, age, address and telephone number, and a title for your drawing.

Ask your parent or carer to sign the back of your drawing or write or email us to say it’s ok for you to enter.

Send your drawing to BTF HQ by 30 June 2012 in an envelope marked ‘Christmas Card Competition’, BTF, 2nd Floor, 3 Devonshire Place, Harrogate, HG1 4AA or by email to info@btf-thyroid.org

If yours is the winning design, we will put your name and age on the back of the Christmas card. That’s why you need an adult’s permission to take part.

We won’t be able to return your drawing, so you might want to make a copy!

The drawings will be judged by Dr Tim Cheetham who is a Consultant Paediatric Endocrinologist (a hormone specialist who works with children).

The winning design will include details of the winner and will be advertised with other BTF Christmas cards in the September issue of *BTF News 81*, and on our website. The winner will receive a framed poster of the design and a BTF certificate, together with packs of their winning design.

For more information about the competition, visit the BTF website.
PROJECT UPDATES

Thyroid disorders and children

Donna Reed writes: We are moving along building up the parent and children’s area of the website, and we continue to see quite an interest in this area of the website. The BTF recently received grants from the Society for Endocrinology (£2,500) and Bettys and Taylors of Harrogate (£1,000) designated for children’s features on the BTF website. We appreciate these donations.

We are continuing to seek funding for additional interactive web activities that will teach children about thyroid disease in addition to our streaming video featuring ‘Mr Thyroid’.

Thyroid and pregnancy

Donna Reed writes: The project group members have been busy raising awareness of thyroid and pregnancy issues.

Professor John Lazarus spoke recently at the German Thyroid Society, Berlin (Potsdam) together with Roberto Negro. The audience was very interested in thyroid in pregnancy and screening, leading to quite a lively debate.

Dr Shaio Chan spoke on thyroid in pregnancy at the BTF Milton Keynes local group meeting in December (See BTF News 79 January 2012).

Nikki Kieffer, Endocrine Nurse Specialist of Leicester Royal Infirmary and winner of the 2011 BTF Nurse Award, completed and published her research ‘Thyroxine replacement in pregnancy and pre-conception: An audit of patient and GP knowledge of guidelines and current clinical practice in Leicestershire.’ (See Nikki’s final report in BTF News 79 January 2012.)

Nikki was also interviewed on Inside Health on 28 February on BBC Radio 4 about her research.

Thanks to Julia Priestley (BTF staff), we now have a BTF link on www.mumsnet.org.

The results of the CATS study led by Professor John Lazarus were published in the New England Journal of Medicine in February. See article on page 8 of this issue.

Thyroid eye disease

Janis Hickey writes: TEAMeD (Thyroid Eye Disease Amsterdam Declaration Group UK) has made significant progress recently.

Screening tool for use at endocrine clinics: A clinic-based screening tool is being trialled in participating endocrine centres in Newcastle, Cardiff and Exeter, and is being given to all patients diagnosed with Graves’ disease. The aim of the tool is to track referral patterns to specialist thyroid eye disease (TED) clinics.

Audit tool for use in TED clinics: A tool has been developed to assess current referral and treatment patterns for patients with TED by auditing specialist (tertiary) thyroid eye disease clinics. It is being piloted in Newcastle, Cardiff and Moorfields Eye Hospital. Fifty patients newly referred to the clinic will be invited to take part. At the same time the BTF and TEDct are collecting data from patients within one year of their TED diagnosis about referrals, treatment given and delays to treatment.

PRAGMA – Post-Radioactive Iodine Treatment in Graves’ Disease: A meeting recently took place of the investigators involved in the study to audit radioactive iodine treatment of patients with thyroid eye disease. An application is being made for ethics approval.

Royal College of Physicians Guidelines for TED: Our literature search is nearing completion and the evidence is being reviewed. The next stage is to prepare draft recommendations by December 2012.

LEVOTHYROXINE - THE FACTS BEHIND THE STORY

In February this year the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) took the step of suspending the licence for Teva and Numark levothyroxine 100mcg tablets.

The MHRA is the government agency responsible for ensuring that medicines and medical devices work, and are acceptably safe.

The MHRA said in its FAQ that it had received sporadic reports from prescribers and patients, which had increased in December 2011 and January 2012, raising concerns about the interchangeability of the levothyroxine 100mcg tablets manufactured by Teva with other makes of levothyroxine 100mcg tablets.

It said that some people had experienced a loss of control of thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) when switching between the Teva tablets and other makes, and that the manufacturer had also been experiencing difficulties in manufacturing the tablets. Tests conducted in the MHRA’s Medicines Testing Laboratory suggested that the dissolution rate of Teva tablets may differ from other products - i.e. in the amount of levothyroxine that is released over time - and that while this was not conclusive, it was taking prompt action as a precaution.

In the months leading up to this announcement, the BTF received several enquiries from individuals who had been prescribed the Teva product for hypothyroidism who said they were experiencing ‘hypo’ symptoms and asking for advice. Janis Hickey, BTF Director, said:

‘We reported the issue to the British Thyroid Association and also recommended that individuals submit a ‘yellow card’ to the MHRA. One lady in particular contacted her MP.

‘While it would take a number of complaints for such a serious step to be taken, we are glad that the BTF was able to play a role in supporting patients and flagging up this issue promptly.

How are medicines monitored?

The MHRA monitors medicine safety by collecting reports of possible or suspected side-effects from patients and health professionals. These reports are made on ‘Yellow Card’ reporting forms. Pharmaceutical companies also have a legal obligation to pass on reports that they receive about suspected side effects of their products.

The Yellow Card scheme was introduced in the 1960s and the MHRA says it has received over 600,000 Yellow Cards since then.

The reports are entered onto a database and evaluated each week. The MHRA also evaluates data on medicines safety from other sources in the UK and around the world.

If necessary, the MHRA takes action to ensure that the medicine is used in a way that minimises risk, and maximises benefits to the patient. Action might include requiring details of a new side effect to be included in the product information for a medicine, a reduction in recommended dosage might be required, or we may give out warnings about groups of patients who should not be prescribed the medicine’ says a statement on the MHRA website.

Should I be concerned?

Most people will already have been switched from Teva levothyroxine to an alternative
If you are feeling unwell following a switch to a different product, the BTF recommends that you contact your GP and ask for a thyroid function test. It is sometimes necessary to adjust the dose when switching between different products.

If you are still taking Teva levothyroxine 100mcg tablets, the MHRA recommends you make an early appointment with your healthcare professional if you are pregnant (especially during the first three months of pregnancy), have any form of heart disease, or are taking a TSH-suppressive dose of levothyroxine for the treatment of thyroid cancer.

If you are not in one of the above categories and you are still using up a supply of Teva tablets and have been stable on these for some time, the recommendation is that patients continue to take their tablets and change them at their next prescription.

You might find you are switched to two 50mcg tablets of Teva levothyroxine. We have been told that the other strengths are not affected.

Sources
MHRA press release ‘MHRA suspends licence for Teva levothyroxine 100 microgram tablets’ and MHRA FAQ about Teva www.mhra.gov.uk
For more information about the Yellow Card scheme see www.yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk

MANUFACTURERS AND SUPPLIERS OF LEVOTHYROXINE 100mcg TABLETS
adapted from MHRA FAQ ‘Teva levothyroxine questions and answers’

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<td>Mercury Pharma (formerly Goldshield Group Ltd)</td>
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Goldshield rebrands as MercuryPharma

If you are prescribed Eltroxin tablets you may soon be getting them in new packaging. Goldshield, the international pharmaceutical company which sells Eltroxin and other generic prescription medicines, has a new name and identity - MercuryPharma - along with its Antigen, Anpharm and Forley affiliates.

The rebranding follows the company’s acquisition in 2009 by HgCapital, formerly known as Mercury Private Equity.

A new logo has been adopted and the company says its new packaging will be phased in for its products over the coming months.

THYROID IN THE MEDIA

‘Wave goodbye to your wobbly bits’

Is there an association between ‘bra fat’ and an under-active thyroid? Yes, according to an article in the Daily Express on Monday, 5 March 2012 called ‘Wave goodbye to your wobbly bits’.

The BTF wrote to the Daily Express to point out that there is no evidence for this. ‘Putting on weight anywhere on the body may be a symptom of a thyroid disorder, but weight gain could have many other causes.’

The article also suggests that if someone is diagnosed with an under-active thyroid disorder, they should consider cutting down on goitrogens such as broccoli, peaches, soya and strawberries. Again, we explained that there is no research evidence that this will help and they can all be taken in moderation as part of a balanced healthy diet.

‘The weight gain associated with an under-active thyroid may affect any part of the body. We recommend that anyone who thinks they may have a thyroid disorder ask their doctor for a blood test. An under-active thyroid, or hypothyroidism, may be treated with tablets containing a thyroid replacement hormone called levothyroxine. Of course it goes without saying that anyone who is worried about their weight should cut down on sugary foods and take regular exercise in order to lose weight.’

We asked Dr Mark Vanderpump, Consultant Physician and Honorary Senior Lecturer in Diabetes and Endocrinology at the Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust, to comment. He said:

‘Selenium is a mineral essential for thyroid hormone production but there is no evidence that the UK is deficient in selenium. There is also no evidence that the foods quoted (broccoli, peaches, soya and strawberries) contain sufficient amounts of substances (i.e. goitrogen) that impair thyroid function’.

Sad to say, our letter didn’t get published, but we have put the text of the letter on the BTF website.

‘Lust for life’

In January the BBC screened a documentary made by the documentary director Heather Leach, who at the age of 30 was diagnosed with Graves’ disease. When she had surgery, it turned out she also had thyroid cancer.

As reported in The Guardian, Heather said ‘When I was first told I had cancer I felt totally isolated and disconnected; that I couldn’t share all my thoughts as my nearest and dearest wouldn’t understand.’

So she turned the camera on herself and tracked her journey through ill health, treatment, and depression.

Heather went on holiday with a friend and while she was there she turned an important corner. She made a list of the things she wanted to do which included buying a special pair of boots, learning to line dance, filming all the people important to her, skiing, falling in love, having children and making an artwork of her tumours.

A close family friend, ‘Big Ann’, who had leukaemia and who died during the making of the documentary, helped Heather to define what she wanted from life and to face her own mortality.

Continued on page 8
Continued from page 7

Heather told The Guardian: ‘I have learnt who I am from documenting my story, from Ann and from my family - and I believe this has shaped the person I am and the person I will continue to be.’

So did she finish her wish list? The original pair of boots that Heather lusted for remained elusive but the artwork became a reality and the last shots in the documentary show her laughing on the ski slopes ...

‘Lust For Life’ was shown on BBC4 on 23 January 2012.

Source

The BBC highlighted thyroid disorders in several other programmes recently. An operation for thyroid cancer was the focus of one episode of Holby City (let’s hope there were no patients watching who were waiting for surgery as this gave a somewhat misleading picture) and Betty in Mad Men recently had a thyroid nodule.

If you come across fictional or real life accounts about thyroid diseases in the press or on television we’d love to hear from you. Please email editor@btf-thyroid.org.

RESEARCH IN THE NEWS

Seaweed consumption linked to thyroid cancer risk

Regular seaweed consumption among post-menopausal women increased their risk of developing thyroid cancer, according to a recent study by Japanese scientists for the Japan Public Health Center-based Prospective Study Group.

The researchers surveyed nearly 53,000 Japanese women aged between 40 and 69 over 14 years. There were 134 thyroid cancer cases, including 113 cases of papillary thyroid carcinoma which is the most common and fortunately highly treatable type.

Those who ate seaweed daily were 1.7 times more likely to develop cancer than those who ate it no more than twice a week, the study found.

Seaweed accounts for about 80% of Japanese people’s iodine intake - considerably more than most people outside Japan are likely to consume. The researchers suggest that there may be a link with the iodine in seaweed, but do not have an explanation why post-menopausal women had an increased risk.

Source
Google News http://tinyurl.com/752n6sj

Reference

Antenatal thyroid screening fails to improve IQ in three-year-olds

Children of mothers screened and treated for reduced thyroid function during pregnancy show no signs of improved IQ compared to women who receive no treatment, new research has uncovered.

Scientists from Cardiff University’s School of Medicine working with colleagues from The Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine at Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, and colleagues from Turin, Italy took blood samples from more than 20,000 women at about 13 weeks of pregnancy to test for thyroid function.

Women were randomly assigned to one of two groups; in the first, women with low thyroid function were given levothyroxine - a thyroid hormone - to take during the remainder of their pregnancy. In the second, women with low thyroid function did not receive levothyroxine. The children of the mothers with low thyroid function were tested by psychologists at the age of three to assess their IQ.

‘Previous research indicated an association between low maternal thyroid hormone levels in pregnancy and low IQ in children but it was not known whether early treatment with thyroid hormone could prevent the impairment,’ said Professor John Lazarus from Cardiff University’s Centre for Endocrine and Diabetes Sciences, who led the study. Professor Lazarus is a former BTF Trustee and a member of the BTF pregnancy project group.

‘Our study showed no such preventive effect. There was no difference in IQ between children of women who received thyroid hormones and children of women in the group that didn’t.’

‘This indicates that testing for low thyroid function in early pregnancy does not prevent impairment of childhood cognitive function.’

Current UK guidelines do not recommend routine antenatal screening for hypothyroidism in pregnancy. The study adds further support for this recommendation.

‘Earlier work suggested that as many as one in five children with lower IQs might be attributable to low thyroid status in the mother’ said Professor Sir Nicholas Wald from the Wolfson Institute. ‘This earlier work raised the possibility that antenatal screening would be worthwhile. It is disappointing that the results of our randomised trial showed no benefit’.

The research, published in The New England Journal of Medicine, was funded by The Wellcome Trust and Compagnia di San Paolo, Turin.

Source

Reference

FUNDRAISING

If you are involved in a fundraising event in aid of BTF please get in touch so that we can send you sponsorship forms, posters and other publicity materials. We can also supply BTF T-shirts or running vests, but please allow enough time for us to get the right size for you.

If you are employed, please check with your employer to find out whether it operates a match-funding scheme (matching all or part of what you raise).

Please send us some information about your event and include photograph(s) along with your permission to publish them in BTF News and the BTF website.

A big thank you to all our fundraisers!

Lesley Antrobus, who took part in the Balfron 10k run on 22 April.

Lesley said: ‘This year I’m running the 10k for a charity close to my heart - the British Thyroid Foundation. My eldest daughter Becky was born with congenital hypothyroidism, which means she was born without a thyroid gland.’

‘Thyroid disorders are relatively uncommon in children. Once they have left the doctor’s office with a diagnosis many parents feel at a loss when questions arise about symptoms, treatment, care and future health. With
limited research and information to hand this can be very overwhelming and having experienced this first hand it’s a scary thing to go through with your newborn."

‘If I hadn’t had the likes of the BTF to guide me through this time then things would have been so much more difficult. No amount of research could answer my questions and give me the information I needed until I was put in touch with this Foundation and their specialists.’

See: www.justgiving.com/lesley-antrobus

Luke Stacey, who took part in a boxing match at One Nation Boxing Gym on 25 March and raised £300.

Luke, aged 27, who stands at 5ft 10ins and weighs 13st 4lbs, fought Kane Dickenson, aged 28, who is 6ft 1in and weighs 13st.

Luke said: ‘One of my little girls was born without a thyroid so I thought it would be good to feel like I was helping out and doing something positive about it.’

Staff at Leonard Brothers Veterinary Centre, Whitchurch, Shropshire, who raised £384.32 through fundraising at the practice and practice events.

Emma Morrison, who will donate a percentage of the proceeds from her dressmaking lessons. See: www.justgiving.com/Emma-Morrison-Dressmaking

Congratulations to Robbie and Gay Somerville, who raised £255 at their 40th wedding anniversary party at the Lerwick Masonic Hall, Shetland, on 29 October 2011.

Mrs A Keeble, for sending a donation of £670 on behalf of the ladies that run the small shop at St Peter’s Church, Bredhurst, Kent.

Bridge O’Connor and her local group who sent £17 from a share of the profits from a raffle.

Anita Yeadon for her donation of £50, which was given to the BTF as a thank you to Angela Hammond (BTF Trustee and office volunteer) for renovating a painting of her father’s.

Julie Long from York who raised £70 at a coffee morning and in lieu of Christmas Cards.

Future fundraisers

Christopher Brown is planning to climb Ben Nevis on 26 May with his two teenage sons.

Chris, who hopes to raise £500, said: ‘Since being diagnosed with Graves’ disease in August 2011 it has become apparent to me that there is limited knowledge and understanding of this and other thyroid conditions.

‘Graves’ disease is the most common cause of hyperthyroidism, and usually presents itself during early adolescence and although the symptoms of Graves' disease can be treated as yet it has no known cure.

‘It is my aim to raise funds to aid in research and education of thyroid conditions.’

See: www.justgiving.com/Chris-Brown16

Steve Robb is taking part in a series of runs for the BTF during 2012.

Steve completed the Great Edinburgh Run last October, which inspired him to take on a bigger challenge this year.

His series of events includes: The Inverness Half Marathon, the Angus Half Marathon, the Edinburgh Half Marathon, the Perth Kilt Run, the Dundee Half Marathon, the Great Scottish Run and the Aviemore Half Marathon.

Steve said: ‘Our daughter Eilidh was discovered to be amongst the very small percentage (one in 4,000) of children to be born without a thyroid gland. This was discovered thanks to early and accurate testing, so often ignored but so important to our children. One small test meant Eilidh could lead a normal life.

‘The BTF is important to us as we want to ensure that research into all types of thyroid conditions in children continues and that parents like us continue to get all the support and information they so desperately need.

‘Touched and moved by everyone’s kind donations last year I decided that I wanted to push myself a little bit harder this year, though my initial plan has morphed into a madcap scheme. I am pleased with what lies in wait and hope to do you all, and Eilidh and my wife Natalie, proud.’

See: www.justgiving.com/SteveRobb79

Vicky Loftus, from Wigan, Lancashire, will take part in the BUPA Great Manchester 10k run on 20 May.

She said: ‘In April 2009 I was admitted to hospital seriously ill and after a series of tests was diagnosed some weeks later with Graves’ disease along with severe thyroid eye disease. Last October I had a total thyroidectomy and for the first time feel that I am finally on the road to recovery. The information I have had from the BTF has been invaluable for me and my family during this time and I would like to do a little to help other families that find themselves in the same situation.

‘Along with my husband, I am running in the Great Manchester 10k run this year and feel it would be a good opportunity to raise funds for the charity and also to raise awareness of thyroid conditions. Many people are unaware - as I was before my diagnosis - of the awful problems a thyroid condition can cause.’

Prerana Parikh, Aly Camp, Sue Cheshire, Maxine Rodriguez, Tina Barnes and Wendy Mytom will walk the West Highland Way in Scotland from May 2 to May 8 to raise money for the BTF and Linden Lodge School.

Prerana said: ‘We are doing this walk for a number of personal reasons. Some of us are doing it in memory of loved ones who have passed away and some of us are doing it as a personal challenge. However, we also wanted to make it count for something.

‘We wanted to link our walk to fundraising for some charities that have a personal meaning in our lives. Two of us have family members whose lives have been affected by cerebral palsy and hypothyroidism and we wanted to donate any money raised to support charities that strive to research these conditions and/or improve the lives of those affected.’

See: www.justgiving.com/Prerana-Parikh2

Kaisha Madden from Kelso will be taking part in a Dance-a-thon on Saturday 7 July and is hoping to raise £500.

Michelle Mullin-Cheatley from Corby Northamptonshire will be shaving her hair off for the BTF.

See: www.justgiving.com/michelle-mullin-cheatley

John Pyne, will be taking part in the Edinburgh Marathon on 27 May to raise money for the BTF.

Neil Prentice has volunteered to raise funds for the BTF. Due to unforeseen circumstances his planned ten-day cycle in May 2012 from Land’s End to John O’Groats will now take place in August/September 2012. When the dates and route is finalised, details of how to sponsor Neil will be provided.

Continued on page 10
Many thanks for your generous donations. We are grateful for them all, including those donated by members at the time of joining BTF or at renewal time, which are too many to list here.

Elizabeth Barber for her continued support and her kind donation of £20.

David Watson, for his donation of £50.

Mr G Grodner, for the donation of £100 raised by the Edward Terry Lodge No. 2722.

A donation of £150 in memory of Margaret Cooper, who died peacefully in her sleep on 10 December 2011, aged 89.

She had made a list of wishes in which she asked for no flowers at her funeral, but donations to BTF.

She had been a keen supporter of the charity and had held several fundraising events in the past. She didn’t suffer from a thyroid disorder herself, but several members of her close family did and she was always very supportive.

She will be sadly missed by her family and friends who will continue with her fundraising in her memory.

Janis Hickey writes: Margaret Cooper and her daughter Monica and granddaughter Alison have been donating the proceeds from sales of greetings cards and gifts from the Webb Ivory catalogue to the BTF for many years. We would like to thank them both and the residents of the retirement home where Margaret lived, for their generous support.

Mrs Hollinshead for her annual donation of £20 in memory of her grandson Finbarr Joseph Belcher

Thank you for all the donations made in memory of Mr Peter Rainford to the amount of £256.09. Our sincere condolences to Mrs Rainford and family.

Lord Jamie Borwick, Federated Foundation, for his donation of £1,000.

A legacy of £46,716.20 to BTF, to be used for research into hypothyroidism assay methods and its application to individual medication.
might be wrong with your thyroid?

What were the symptoms?

‘Thyroid Dysfunction and Fibrin Network

The recently published article, entitled ‘Thyroid Dysfunction and Fibrin Network Structure: A Mechanism for Increased Thrombotic Risk in Hyperthyroid Individuals’, looked at blood clot formation in hyperthyroid individuals, the characteristics of that clot, and how easy it was to break down; and compared this with what happened in healthy volunteers who were rendered temporarily hyperthyroid.

Hyperthyroidism is associated with increased thrombosis risk, and clot structure determines susceptibility to vascular thrombotic events such as heart attack or stroke.

The researchers conclude that hyperthyroid individuals have higher levels of clotting factors, which was found to promote a greater tendency to clot and a denser clot structure that was harder to break down.

These changes can however be altered by treating individuals so that they achieve normal thyroid function.

Temporary hyperthyroidism in healthy volunteers had no effect on any of the clot structure parameters.

The Faculty of 1000 aims to identify and evaluate the most important articles in biology and medical research publications after they have been published. Its reviewer wrote about the article:

‘This paper offers for the first time convincing evidence demonstrating altered ex vivo clot structure and fibrinolysis in endogenous (but not short-term exogenous) hyperthyroidism... As hyperthyroidism is one of the commonest endocrine pathologies, further studies are necessary in order to evaluate any association between altered clot structure and clinical thrombotic events in subjects with long-term therapy with thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH)-suppressive doses of levothyroxine.’

Reference


BTF Research Award 2012

The deadline for the 2012 BTF Research Award is 31 August. Full details were published in BTF News (number 79 January 2012) and are also on the BTF website.

Ellie Williams - Singer-Songwriter

And Thyroid Cancer Survivor

A year ago Ellie Williams (31) had been married for eight years, was working for a well known computer/mp3 player company and building a reputation as a singer-songwriter, when all this came to an abrupt halt. She was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and for a while she thought she might never sing again.

Now a year on, her voice is back. Ellie recently performed live on BBC Radio Devon. She’s just performed her first full-length gig in Plymouth, and is soon to release a new album. She’s also landed a concert date in Poole in November where she’ll be supporting the legendary Joan Armatrading.

Ellie talks here to BTF Editor Judith Taylor who is herself a thyroid cancer survivor and an enthusiastic choral singer.

When did you first realise something might be wrong with your thyroid?

What were the symptoms?

‘Just before Christmas 2010 - the Christmas of the awful snow - I had just come back from Christmas shopping with my husband and we were relaxing with a couple of glasses of wine. I rubbed my neck and found a single lump just above the collar bone.

I thought it was probably just a swollen gland as I’d had flu several times in the months before that. But I wanted to be sure. Because of my work I was quite body-aware and I actually went to the doctor the next day.

‘My doctor was amazing. He said, “no, you’re not imagining it”. He sent me to an endocrinologist, who confirmed it was a lump on my thyroid, but told me that 98% of lumps were benign.

‘As a singer, all I could think about was my voice. I never thought for a minute that it could be cancer.

‘The endocrinologist sent me for an ultrasound scan, where they discovered a

Continued on page 12
lump on the other lobe, and then for a biopsy. I think I was beginning to wonder ... but he again reassured me that “in 98% of cases it is usually nothing at all”.

When did you learn it was cancer? How did you feel when you were told?

‘Ten days before I was due to see the endocrinologist for the results I had The Phone Call. It was a Monday. His assistant asked if I could go to my endocrinologist’s other practice in Weston Super Mare - 100 miles away - the next day.

‘I thought to myself, that’s probably not a good thing ...

‘When we went in the room my endocrinologist said “I think you probably know why you’re here” ... yes, the biopsy had confirmed papillary thyroid cancer.

‘The first couple of nights after that I didn’t really sleep. Irrationally I thought for a bit that I could die. My mind kept thinking, how can I fix this, and I felt so hopeless because I couldn’t sort it out myself.

‘As I got more information I realised that I could do it, that I was going to be ok. You just step onto that treadmill of appointments.’

What support were you able to get from your family and friends?

‘I have a wonderful husband, Steve. We will have been married for nine years in July, he really has been a rock and I hope I’ve been his rock too. My mum and dad have been amazing also, and I found that, as a patient, you get a lot of strength from keeping them up as well.

‘I took a conscious decision to tell people at my work. I didn’t take much time off. I told them I wanted them all to talk to me as usual because I hadn’t actually changed, that “cancer” is just a word.’

When did you first sing again after your operation? Has your voice changed at all?

‘It was October. I found myself humming in the shower, and thought, gosh! I called Steve, my husband, and said “I can sing!” So I sat down at the keyboard and started singing and playing. It was hard, and my voice was still weak, but it has slowly got back to strength. Last Friday was my first full-length gig and I had no problems.’

What were you told before the operation about how it could affect your voice and other possible complications?

‘The surgeon was very frank with me. He knew I was a singer and showed me a diagram of how the voice box is connected to the nerves. He said he couldn’t guarantee I would sing again. Whether I didn’t take in the information fully or just didn’t think about it, I don’t know. I just knew I really needed to go through with the operation. He also explained to me that there was a possibility my parathyroids could be damaged.

‘I sat and wrote a new song called “The Last” and recorded it in case I couldn’t sing it after the operation. When I discovered I could actually sing afterwards I finished it again with a hopeful ending.’

Where and when were you treated?

‘I had surgery a month later in Exeter to remove my thyroid and was home the next day. It was during the Glastonbury Festival and I remember hearing the band Coldplay on television performing “Every teardrop is a waterfall” and thinking “it’s fine, I’m awake and I’m home!”

‘After the operation I couldn’t swallow, cough or burp but I do remember coming round and making a sound to test my voice. I remember the surgeon coming in and I asked him, can I talk, and he said, “you’re talking to me now!”

‘My biggest fear was about having calcium problems. I was told after the operation that the surgeon thought he’d preserved all my parathyroids. Even so, I had pins and needles in hands and feet for a while afterwards.

‘I had radioactive iodine treatment in August. I was in an isolation room but I took an iPad in with me and I talked with my mum on Skype. After 12 hours though I was very sick and didn’t want to talk any more. What kept me going was that I’d had to walk through the cancer ward beforehand where some people were having really heavy treatment, and I thought, “I can do this, it’s only for three days. All I have to do is sit in a room for a while. It’s nothing, compared with what so many other people are going through.”

‘I’ve just had my six-month check-up and I’m waiting for the results at the moment. I’m seeing my oncologist in June. I’m feeling good, my life is returning back to normal.’

What message do you have for other people going through this?

‘I’ve had dark days, but I’ve been helped by going to the Force Cancer Charity centre in Exeter - http://forcecancercharity.co.uk/ - where you can meet other survivors, have coffee and tea and enjoy a free massage. They even have free counselling and benefits advice. There’s a beautiful garden, a place to go to centre yourself.’

Ellie finished by saying: ‘My new album includes a lot of material written while I was going through treatment. I’m usually known for sad songs, but this album is a lot more up-beat. I know what’s important to me now.

‘I’m enjoying the springtime and seeing the trees bursting into leaf. It’s what life should be about, the marvel of everything. I am just grateful for what I have and who I have in my life, my husband, my parents, my friends and colleagues, and my pets.’
Is soya milk allowed on the ‘low iodine diet’?

MQ asks: I am due to have radioactive iodine treatment soon.

I normally drink skimmed milk. The letter from the hospital says that if you are drinking milk then soya milk is best. However in your booklet Thyroid Cancer - For Patients By Patients it says that soya milk is not allowed. Please advise.

Our medical advisor replies: The recommendation in our thyroid cancer booklet not to drink soya milk before radioactive iodine treatment was given by our radiation advisor and agreed by the large group of medical advisors involved in reviewing and contributing to the booklet.

There is evidence of certain brands of soya milk being withdrawn from sale by authorities in countries such as Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Japan because the soya milk contained excessive amounts of iodine or being highly enriched with seaweed products that naturally contain iodine.

Reducing iodine intake around the time of the radioactive iodine dose is important. In some hospitals people are asked not to eat any fish, seafood or dairy products for two weeks before and two weeks after the treatment. This makes the person relatively iodine-deficient and improves the uptake of the dose. The exclusion of soya milk is thus based on the possible risk of it containing iodine, and also possible interference with radioactive iodine absorption and thyroid function.

The BTF editor writes: There is a detailed ‘low iodine diet’ in the booklet, which also includes a meal plan and recipes you can follow while on the diet. The booklet can be ordered via the BTF website: www.btf-thyroid.org

Thyroid hormones and glucose metabolism

DL writes: I was very interested to read the article by Professor Graham Williams in the BTF News (number 77, Autumn 2011) in which he referred to the connection between thyroid hormones and glucose metabolism. This was the first time that I had read of this connection.

I am 65 and have an under-active thyroid which was diagnosed nine years ago. For the last eight years I have been experiencing problems with low blood sugar. A consultant gave me many tests in order to try and find the cause of my blood sugar problems, but none of the tests gave an explanation. When I saw the consultant, he doubled my levothyroxine dosage from 50 to 100mcg. After seven days my low blood sugar problems disappeared, but unfortunately after three months they returned. I have friends who also have under-active thyroids and low blood sugar problems.

I have to eat a generous portion of protein at every meal and take care to eat foods with a low glycaemic value. I carry high protein snacks to eat between meals when I go out, but my blood sugar can still drop between meals, or just before a meal. I have thyroid blood tests regularly.

Our Medical Advisor replies: There have been many studies in recent years aimed at gaining a better understanding of how thyroid hormones act in various organs throughout the body.

Studies have shown that thyroid hormones affect glucose metabolism which includes a meal plan and recipes you can follow while on the diet. The booklet can be ordered via the BTF website: www.btf-thyroid.org

How can I get my thyroid medication abroad?

KN asks: I am travelling for about two years around South America, Central America, Asia, Indonesia, Nepal, India, Australia, New Zealand, and Africa and possibly more and will not be coming back to the UK to be able to get prescriptions or blood tests etc for my thyroid condition.

If you have any information/advice on what I can do to make sure I can have my medication in other countries I would much appreciate it.

The BTF office replies: We recommend that if anyone taking medication is thinking of travelling they to contact the Home Office direct on 0207 0350472 and ask for advice.

You should also contact the British offices of the Embassy for any country you are visiting

Continued on page 14
before you intend to travel to confirm any particular regulations they have and how you can sort out the prescribing of medication in the country you are travelling to and to ask for details of a doctor you can register with on a temporary basis to enable you to continue with your medication whilst away. The Embassy should be able to put you in touch with someone before you travel to arrange treatment whilst away.

Ramadan

SB asks: Is it safe/adviseable to fast during the month of Ramadan when one has an over-active thyroid and is taking medication for it? I am taking one 20mg carbimazole tablet and two 10mg propranolol tablets daily.

Our medical advisor replies: Fasting during Ramadan should be ok provided that thyroid hormone levels are within the normal range on treatment. The medication(s) could be taken at the start and/or at the break of the fast.

Can I take vitamins with antithyroid drugs?

SB asks: Is it safe to take vitamins when on carbimazole and propanolol for an over-active thyroid? If so, can these be taken at the same time?

Our medical advisor replies: Vitamins will not interfere with the absorption of antithyroid drugs. However, if you are also on levothyroxine, as part of a 'block-and-replace' strategy, then minerals such as iron or calcium (which some multivitamin capsules contain) may interfere with its absorption.

Thyroid cancer - who needs to know?

MW writes: I have recently been diagnosed with thyroid cancer and have found your book Thyroid Cancer for Patients, by Patients to be of great use.

In the introduction you welcome comments. There are a number of organisations who need to know that your health has changed, for example:

Your employer;

The DLVA - this is a statutory requirement especially if the driver passed the driving test before 1 January 1997 as they will normally hold C1, D and D1 categories;

and insurers, both for life cover, holiday cover and car insurance.

There may be the ability to claim critical life cover from an insurance policy.

For me, at a time when there is a lot of change a check-list would be good and would add to this excellent publication.

The BTF Editor replies: Thank you for these suggestions. We will certainly take them into account when we revise the booklet. Meanwhile, best wishes for your treatment and recovery.

We welcome letters from our members but please note that letters may be edited at the Editor’s discretion.

Please address general letters to the Editor, BTF News, The British Thyroid Foundation, 3 Devonshire Place, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 4AA or by email to editor@btf-thyroid.org.

Please address medical queries to the Medical Enquiries Coordinator at the address above or by email to medical-query@btf-thyroid.org.

Remember to include your membership number.

Unless you state otherwise, we will assume that you consent to having your letter and reply published in the newsletter. Medical queries will be anonymised.

Medical questions, whether or not intended for publication, will normally be referred to one of our medical advisors, and you will receive a confidential reply. Please note that our advisors are not able to give you a written personal consultation and that their advice is provided for information only. For specific medical queries you should make an appointment with your doctor.

You should not alter the recommended treatment issued by your personal physician without their knowledge and agreement.
Newcastle & North Tyneside

MARCH: Our first meeting of the year on 24 March was well attended with several newcomers. Kate Farnell, pioneer of the Butterfly Cancer Trust, gave an inspiring presentation, detailing the development of the group from small beginnings to what is now a well-established and award-winning service, with a brilliant medical team in this area. Kate shared with us her own relevant medical journey through complicated surgery and emphasised how vital it is for a patient to have clear information as well as emotional support from others who have made similar journeys.

After the break we were invited to join in some gentle stretching exercises demonstrated by Ali Broady, an I Vengar yoga teacher. Ali also gave a fascinating insight into the history of this approach.

NEXT MEETING: Saturday 14 July from 9.45am to 12 noon.

PROGRAMME: Dr Jean MacLeod, FRCP Consultant Physician, University Hospital of North Tees and Hartlepool on ‘Going though pregnancy when you have a thyroid problem’.

CONTACT: Judith Tel. 0191 2531765 between 4pm and 6pm Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday or email judith@dryhurst.co.uk

Notts/Derby

MARCH: General support and update meeting.

NEXT MEETINGS: King’s Mill Hospital has invited Notts/Derby BTF to be involved in two more large awareness events again this year. The awareness events will be on Tuesday 3 July from 6pm to 7.30pm at the King’s Mill Conference Centre, King’s Mill Hospital and Thursday 12 July from 6pm to 7.30pm, at the Holy Trinity Community Centre, Boundary Rd, Newark. The information is already listed on the NHS website www.sfn-tr.nhs.uk/index.php/member-involved/member-events

CONTACT: Bridget O’Conner Tel. 01623 750 330 after 6pm weekdays and anytime weekends.

Wharfedale

Our newest local group! Please come along and support our first meeting on 26 September at Pool Village Memorial Hall from 7pm to 9pm.

PROGRAMME: Talks by Janis Hickey, Director of BTF, and R Aijan, Senior Lecturer/Consultant in Diabetes and Endocrinology, University of Leeds.

CONTACT: Caroline Fields Tel. 0113 288 6393

The BTF is very appreciative of our fantastic team: employees, volunteers, members, professionals, doctors and nurses who help the organisation to develop, as proved by our successful activities over the years.

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Newsletter Disclaimer:
The purpose of the BTF newsletter is to provide information to BTF members. Whilst every effort is made to provide correct information, it is impossible to take account of individual situations. It is therefore recommended that you check with a member of the relevant medical profession before embarking on any treatment other than that which has been prescribed for you by your doctor. We are happy to forward correspondence between members, but do not necessarily endorse the views expressed in letters forwarded.

Medical comments in the newsletter are provided by members of the medical profession and are based on the latest scientific evidence and their own individual experiences and expertise. Sometimes differing opinions on diagnosis, treatment and management of thyroid disorders may be reflected in the comments provided, as would be the case with other fields of medicine. The aim is always to give the best possible information and advice. If you have any comments or queries regarding this publication or on any matter concerning the British Thyroid Foundation we would be pleased to hear from you.
BTF LOCAL COORDINATORS
Our local coordinators organise meetings but will also be happy to take calls on thyroid disorders that they have experienced. Please see the key below

Birmingham Janet (PC,CS,RIC) 0121 6287435
Bolton Carole (FC,CS,RIC) 01204 853557
Coventry – Colin (O,RI,U) 02476 711577
Edinburgh Margaret (PC) 0131 6647223
London Lorraine (U) 01843 579793

Milton Keynes Wilma (U) 01908 562740
Newcastle upon Tyne & North Tyneside Judith (U) 0191 2531765
Notts/Derby Bridget (GR,TS,U,PH) 01623 750330
Wharfedale Caroline (O,U) 0113 2886393

LorraineWilliams@btf-thyroid.org

British Thyroid Association
Butterfly Thyroid Cancer Trust
Thyroid Cancer Support Group
Thyroid Eye Disease Charitable Trust:
Cancer52

AMEND
– Information on medullary thyroid cancer. Contact: Jo Grey 01892 516076 email: info@amend.org.uk website: http://www.amend.org.uk

Hypoparathyroidism (HPTH) UK
– an organisation providing information and support about all types of parathyroid disorders. Contact: Liz Glenister email: liz@hpth.org.uk website: http://www.hpth.org.uk. HPTH Helplines 01342 516315 (South) and 01623 750330 (North)

Butterfly Thyroid Cancer Trust – is the first registered charity in the UK dedicated solely to the support of people affected by thyroid cancer and is available to patients nationwide. Contact: Kate Farnell 01207 545469 email: enquiries@butterfly.org.uk website: http://www.butterfly.org.uk

Cancer52 – an alliance of organisations working to improve outcomes for patients affected by less common cancers website:http://www.cancer52.org.uk

Thyroid Eye Disease Charitable Trust: TEDct, PO Box 1928, Bristol BS37 0AX. 0844 8008133 email: ted@tedct.co.uk website: http://www.tedct.co.uk

British Thyroid Association website: http://www.british-thyroid-association.org

British Association of Endocrine and Thyroid Surgeons website: http://www.baets.org.uk

Sense about Science website: http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk

BRITISH THYROID FOUNDATION DETAILS

ALL ENQUIRIES TO: The British Thyroid Foundation, 2nd floor, 3 Devonshire Place, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 4AA
Tel 01423 709707 or 01423 709448. Website: http://www.btf-thyroid.org.

Office enquiry line open: Mon to Thurs, 10am - 2pm. If in the event of a complaint, please address your correspondence to ‘The Chair of Trustees’.

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CURENT MEMBERSHIP RATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members living in the UK</th>
<th>By cheque</th>
<th>By standing order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full: £20 per year</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full: £17 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concession: £10 per year</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concession: £8.50 per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members living overseas</th>
<th>By cheque from a UK bank account</th>
<th>By standing order through a UK Bank</th>
<th>By sterling bank draft drawn on a UK Bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£25 Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£35 Outside Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concession: unwaged, senior citizen, under-18s and students in full-time education

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