



**C A T S**  
**CUMBRIA ADVISORY THYROID SERVICE**  
**SPRING 2015 - Newsletter**



*Long may C.A.T.S. continue to give hope to Thyroid patients everywhere*

HOPE

**Hello Everyone**

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2015 and a very warm welcome to all our new members who have joined us recently. We hope everyone has had a nice Christmas and has managed to keep free from the cold and flu germs that are going around. Thank you to everyone who sent Christmas cards and best wishes along with membership renewals and extra donations. Without this wonderful support from everyone C.A.T.S. would not be able to continue, sadly there are very few independent Thyroid support groups working within our communities so it is important that we support these groups as much as possible so they can continue with this valuable work.

This May we will have been running as a support group for 18 years. The group was first set up in 1997, to provide information, advice and support to Thyroid patients and their families and friends. During that time we have achieved many wonderful goals including raising the awareness of Thyroid problems within this area. However Thyroid problems are ongoing as many new patients are being diagnosed each year. There are also many people out there who have been misdiagnosed or worse undiagnosed, all of these people need our help. So please help us to continue for many more years to come.

In our Christmas newsletter I reported that Elizabeth who runs the (TFNC) Thyroid Foundation of North Cumbria support group was unable to continue with her work owing to illness. C.A.T.S. have agreed to send out copies of our newsletters and to provide support and Thyroid information to all TFNC members until Elizabeth is well enough to resume her work. If you are a TFNC member, please let me know if you don't want to receive any more of my newsletters. Everyone at C.A.T.S. send love and best wishes for a speedy recovery to Elizabeth.



### **Thyroid Friends.**

Thank you to everyone who continues to support us by being a Thyroid Friend. Our membership database is growing however we always welcome new members, so if you know anyone who would like to join us just contact me at the C.A.T.S. office using one of the contact methods listed at the back of your newsletter. Membership subscriptions are one of our main sources of income. Our membership costs £6-00 for 12 months. This covers 4 newsletters, access to our helpline, invitations to our meetings and special events, plus information and advice from our Thyroid advisory team.

### **Gold Stars \***

Please look out for a gold star on your newsletter as this indicates that your membership is due for renewal. You can use the form in your newsletter or contact me at the office to renew.

### **Public Meetings Update**

We are currently looking at suitable venues for this year's meetings. Our favourite venues are Kendal and Barrow but we do realise not everyone can attend meetings held at these venues owing to lack of transport etc. If you would like to suggest a suitable venue can you please let me know? It needs to be a community centre, village hall or a room in a public building that can be hired for a few hours. We would also need access to a kitchen and toilets.

We are also looking for extra volunteers to help sell raffle tickets and serve refreshments at our meetings, so if you can help with these jobs please let me know.

We are hoping to kick-start our project of raising Thyroid awareness in our local schools. Research is now showing that many younger people are developing Thyroid problems in their teens and early twenties, however many will struggle to get a diagnosis as Thyroid dysfunction is not considered to be a 'young person's problem'. We feel that by running this project we may prevent many young adults suffering years of feeling unwell, but not knowing why. We would like to thank Sarah and Andrew Searle and their families and friend's for raising the money to help us run this project.



## **Blood Tests**

One subject that crops up often in my postbag is the subject of blood tests. Some patients struggle to get a proper diagnosis. This is usually when they are in the early stages of Thyroid dysfunction and many of the symptoms being presented can be confused with other health problems. We also get lots of phone calls and letters from patients who have been told their blood test are borderline. This is frustrating for patients as by this stage they usually are feeling quite ill and just want something or someone to make them feel better. Many patients are surprised to be told that this stage can last for many months, and the only thing the patient can do is to make sure they keep having regular blood tests (every 6 to 8 weeks is ideal). C.A.T.S. usually advise that in most cases your Thyroid hormones will eventually go low or high enough to register on your blood test, then your GP will be able to start treatment. Doctors often tell patients they will start to feel well once they start treatment however this is not always the case as it can take many months for patients to get on to a balanced dose and feel well again

Another reason patients contact C.A.T.S. is when they have been on treatment for quite a while and then they suddenly don't feel well yet their blood tests are normal This can be for a number of reasons:

- There may be other health problems which may not have been diagnosed
- You may have had a mild virus infection, this can make you feel unwell and can take some time to clear from your body
- Patients near or going through the menopause can experience days when they don't feel well
- A diet that lacks vital vitamins and minerals can make us feel ill
- Poor sleep patterns also make you feel out of sorts
- Patients suffering from anxiety or depression have low levels of the feel good hormone Serotonin. Many Thyroid patients also have low levels of this hormone and it is linked to low T3 ( Liothyronine ) this is another hormone that our Thyroid gland makes. However doctors do not routinely test the levels of this hormone and prefer to use the cheaper T4 and TSH tests.
- Your T4 blood test may be in the normal range but could be near the top of the T4 range (this will give you symptoms of over-activity) or near the bottom of the range (underactive symptoms) in both cases you will feel unwell. The blood test normal ranges in South Cumbria are as follows

T4-(between 8 to 18)

TSH-(between 0.02 to 6.00)

Other areas of the country may use a different range so check with your health practice, but if you don't feel well even though your tests are normal, go to your doctor, tell them how you feel and ask to be tested to see if any of the above reasons are why you don't feel well.



## **Sight Problems**

Many Thyroid patients suffer with eyesight problems, however most of the time these are only mild and no cause for concern. It is quite usual to find under-active patients with sore gritty eyes (dry eyes). Artificial tear eye drops can help with this problem. Many patients are sensitive to bright lights and wearing tinted glasses may help lessen the glare. Over-active patients can develop (Thyroid Eye Disease) they will probably experience protruding eyes (giving a popeyed appearance) and a feeling of pressure behind the eyes, double vision, difficulty focusing and pain behind the eyes. Occasionally these symptoms can occur in under-active patients. If you do experience problems like this you will need to see an ophthalmologist (eye specialist). Steroid eye drops are often the first treatment given in these cases. Cataracts are also a common problem as we get older, but can be easily sorted out with a simple operation.

Eye problems that can cause concern are conditions such as Glaucoma, Macular-degeneration, Iritis or Retina problems, these conditions all require specialist help. If, unfortunately you are diagnosed with any of these conditions you may be interested in a new service that has been set up by the Barrow Blind Society. The new service is called ECLO (Eye Clinic Liaison Officer). It is situated in the Radio Lonsdale Studio, which is in the reception area of Furness General Hospital. The service provides information on the Blue Badge scheme, Disabled Rail Cards, Benefits advice, information about the Talking Newspaper and Talking Books and many other services available to patients with sight problems. Patients who don't live in the Furness catchment area will be able to get advice and information by contacting the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) helpline on 0303 123 9999 or visit [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

## **Diets**

We are often asked what the best foods to eat are when you are a Thyroid patient. The simple answer is that there are no particular foods that health experts recommend but health professionals are now advising that patients with long term health conditions may benefit from eating a Mediterranean diet. This diet consists of healthy fruits and vegetables, lean protein foods, fish, chicken or tofu and Quorn are good choices, whole grains such as brown rice, quinoa or couscous and healthy fats such as olive oil. If you eat this kind of diet you may find you will lose weight as it cuts out unhealthy stodgy carbohydrates and much of the hidden sugars in the processed foods that many of us are addicted to.



### **Medications Alert**

Many over the counter remedies do not mix very well with your Thyroid medications and the same thing applies to herbal remedies, so if you want to buy any of these products please check with your doctor or pharmacist first as it is better to be safe than sorry. I also want to warn everyone that some prescription medicines can also react with your Thyroid pills. If you are prescribed Calcium and Vitamin D supplements, Iron supplements, Indigestion remedies, some pain-relief medicines, or Anti-depression medications, you need to take these 2-4 hours after your Thyroid pills as these medications can stop your thyroid pills from working. For more advice on this subject please contact me.

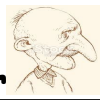
### **Complimentary Therapies**

Having a Thyroid condition can lead to other health conditions developing. Research is showing that some of the complimentary therapies such as Reflexology, Acupuncture, Aromatherapy, Reiki Healing, Relaxation and Remedial Massage can help rebalance the body thereby alleviating some of these health conditions. As always each person will respond to treatments differently. If you want to try one of the above treatments please consult your doctor first for their approval.

Please note complimentary therapies must be used alongside traditional medicines they are not meant to be used as a substitute. You must never stop taking any prescribed medicines without talking to your doctor first.

### **Modern Technology**

In our Late Summer 2014 newsletter, I asked our members what modern item had made the most impact on your life, I got lots of replies some members said the microwave oven, while others said they could not live without their mobile phones. However the item that got the most votes was the computer. It is wonderful how we can keep in touch with loved ones and sending e-mails messages, looking up information and so much more. The way technology has advanced in the last 20 years makes it impossible to imagine what will be possible in the next 20 years.



### **Thinning Hair**

I recently wrote about thinning hair. This is a problem that affects many Thyroid patients. I did suggest that a product called Regaine may be helpful this product contains Minoxadil (a heart drug). I did advise to check with your doctor before you try this product however it has come to my attention that this product is not suitable for anyone on blood pressure medication (sorry I was not aware of this when I first wrote about the product.) If you are bothered by thinning hair C.A.T.S. recommend you should seek advice from your doctor.



## **NHS Services**

In recent months the NHS has come in for much criticism. In 1945 when the minister of health Aneurin Bevan MP had the idea of starting the NHS. The idea was to provide free care for everyone, from the cradle to the grave. Sadly this is now no longer possible owing to a shortage of available funding, staffing shortages, increased population numbers and a higher percentage of people living longer and developing more chronic long term illnesses. Unfortunately all of these situations are putting a strain on the NHS services with a result that many of the services we have come to expect are no longer available. Most of the time the NHS do try to give a good service however mistakes do happen, and unfortunately I do hear tales of patients slipping through the net and not receiving the care they should. If you have any concerns about the care you are receiving and don't know where to turn for advice. Did you know you can phone the Patient Advice and Liaison service (Morecambe Bay area number is 01539 795497) to have a free confidential chat. If you do not live in the Morecambe Bay area you will find most areas operate a service similar to PALS.

Also most health trusts have a customer care department where you can raise issues regarding your healthcare, you will find details of this on your local hospital's website,

For all Morecambe bay hospitals it is <http://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/compliments-concerns-complaints/complaints-patient-relations/> or email [CommentsandComplaints@mbht.nhs.uk](mailto:CommentsandComplaints@mbht.nhs.uk) you can phone them but from experience they always want it in writing, but if you do not have internet write to Westmorland Hospital, Burton Rd Kendal. LA9 7RG

For our TFNC members who might use North Cumbria Hospitals the following applies to you. Go to <http://www.ncuh.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/making-a-complaint/index.aspx> or email [complaints@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints@ncuh.nhs.uk). Or write to The Patient Relations Manager, The Cumberland Infirmary, Newtown Road, Carlisle, Cumbria. CA2 7HY.

## **Heart Disease Warning**

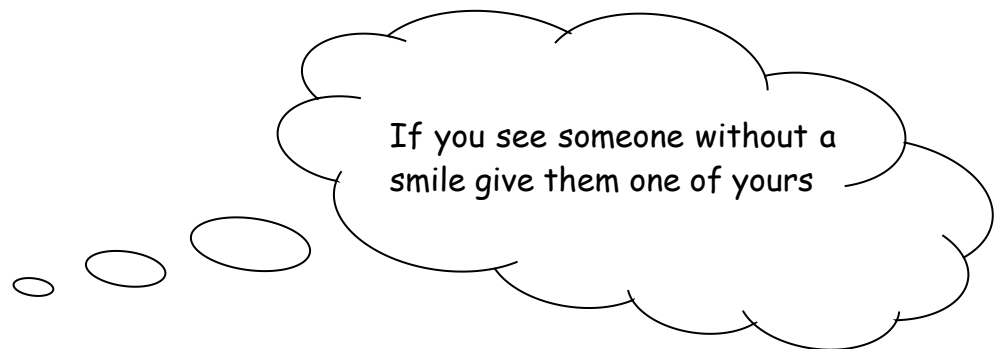
Most people know the classic signs of heart disease, but did you know that ladies often do not get the classic symptoms. Ladies who experience constant indigestion, a tight feeling in the throat and neck, uncomfortable feeling around the rib-cage and even pain in your back, need to be checked out by their GP. All these symptoms can indicate you are developing heart problems and as the saying goes it is better to be safe rather than sorry. As we get older some of the problems that can occur because of our thyroid dysfunction such as excessive weight gain, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, raised sugar levels in your blood and fluid retention can all contribute to patients developing heart disease.



### **Thyroid Awareness Week**

Did you know there is an official international Thyroid Awareness Week. This year the event takes place during the week of May 25th -31<sup>st</sup> to celebrate this event. C.A.T.S. would like to ask our members if they can display a poster for us. We would like the posters to be displayed in community centers, village halls, libraries, doctor's surgeries or anywhere that will catch the eyes of the public. We have just had some new eye-catching posters printed so let's put them to good use. If you would like to help us raise the awareness of this important health condition please get in touch with me at the C.A.T.S. office.

### **Passing thought**



**To All Our Members**



## That's all for now folks

Once again we have come to the end of our newsletter I do hope you enjoy reading the newsletter. Don't forget we welcome any contributions to our newsletter we would like to hear your stories of how long you have been a Thyroid patient. Or any tips you have for coping with a long-term health condition, or even tell us how you came to get diagnosed. You can get in touch by telephone 01229 869705 or by writing to The Old Cottage, Garden Terrace, Baycliff, Ulverston, LA12 -9RP. or you can e-mail me at [-moyramm@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:-moyramm@yahoo.co.uk) or [moyra@cumbriancats.co.uk](mailto:moyra@cumbriancats.co.uk)

Don't forget if you want to help us save money you can receive your newsletter by e-mail to sign up for this please contact Peter at [-richjon51@talktalk.net](mailto:-richjon51@talktalk.net) and ask for your e-mail address to be added to our list, you can change back to paper copies any time you wish.

While we are not having our public meetings, don't forget there is always our website where there is lots of information available for you to download. Go to [www.cumbriancats.co.uk](http://www.cumbriancats.co.uk) however, we do know that not everyone has a computer so if this is the case you can still use our postal information service. Cheerio for now we will be back again in June. Take care everyone, keep well, keep happy.

Best Wishes,

Moyra

### CATS – Information Guidelines FREEDOM OF INFORMATION RULES

Please note that all information supplied to CATS will be treated with the strictest of confidence and will not be passed on to any other source.  
ALL CATS VOLUNTEERS WORK TO STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY  
RULES AT ALL TIMES

*Any information produced in this newsletter is to help those suffering with thyroid disease. Whilst every effort is made to provide accurate information, it is impossible to ensure that the information given is relevant to every individual. No responsibility is accepted by C.A.T.S. and it is recommended and essential that if in any doubt about your condition that you should always contact your doctor, specialist physician or surgeon to seek medical advice.*

C.A.T.S recommends that you ALWAYS seek your Doctor's advice

