

Chatsworth Road Medical Centre

Patient Participation Group

Notes of Informal Meeting

Wednesday 15 March 2023

**Present**

Ken Davis (Chair), Jan Bird, Ian Fowkes, Janet Portman, Michele Young, Nick James

**Apologies**

Ian Gerrard, Deborah King

**Tinnitus support**

Joanne Gordon from Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group gave a comprehensive account of the nature of tinnitus and the support available, including the work of her organisation, the key points of which are summarised below:

1 in 8 people in the UK are affected by tinnitus. In older people research suggests that it may constitute a compensation effect arising from reduced hearing capacity. It can also be caused by viruses, including Covid, and stress makes it worse. Our brains can teach us to live more comfortably with tinnitus. Tests indicate that people ‘tune in’ to the sound, and we have an emotional reaction to noise (for example stress responses to loud noises). Because there is generally much less external noise at night, this is often the time when it is most evident and when people are most likely to have a problem.

Patients can be referred to Audiology at Chesterfield Royal, where good quality hearing aids can be made available together with information and support. In some cases they may be referred for cognitive behavioural therapy. The Tinnitus Support Group work closely with Audiology.

Support groups help because they provide hope. When someone approaches the TSG, they first discuss their own specific background (often finding that their problems are stress-related), and information sheets etc. are provided to them. Meetings are held. Aids are also offered, including sound bands and under the pillow speakers which can be helpful, especially at night. Relaxation, breathing exercises and mindfulness (listening to the sound and learning not to feel anxious about it), music and environmental sounds can all help, as can all sorts of general mental health activities.

Referrals to the group usually come from hospitals, not many from GPs.

Other than one specific type which is caused by a medical condition, there are not different levels of tinnitus, differences are mainly down to the individual’s perception.

Though not formally connected, the activities of the TSG link in with those of Tinnitus UK, who have a useful website which includes a traffic light system for treatments, indicating how useful/safe or otherwise these may be.

TSG meetings are usually held every month, in the form of breakfast meetings (10am) and speaker meetings where tinnitus management is discussed (11am), all taking place at The Badger Pub, Brockwell Lane. Tinnitus UK hold online meetings which are often in evenings or at weekends, so are appropriate for a much wider demographic.

**Items for agenda of next formal meeting:**

1. **Are GPs willing to make referrals to the TSG?**
2. **Production/display of information leaflets and webpage**

**NHS England PPG Champions Group Meeting**

Ken acknowledged that this did constitute an attempt by NHS England to listen to PPGs.

**Item for agenda of next formal meeting:**

**The issue of establishing a way to ensure that the Primary Care Network (in our case covering Chesterfield and Dronfield) gets the views of patients was discussed. As it has not so far been possible to get all the PPGs in the relevant practices to form a group to represent our views, we need to discuss further how to achieve this**.

**Date of next formal meeting:**

**Wednesday 19April, 3.30pm (AGM)**

*(Zoom meeting)*