

ISSUE NO:- 09/ 2018

BULLETIN



EVENTS

Drop-In:-

Greens Lane Methodist Church, Hartburn. We meet here 1pm to 4pm on a Tuesday. Alternative therapy is available for those who enjoy or would like to try Shiatsu.

Social Evenings:

These are held at the Orthoptic Supplies, 176 Belasis Avenue, Billingham, TS23 1EY, on the last Wednesday of every month at 7pm.

Shopping Online????

Buy items or book holidays through the Stockton MS Group web site and we will receive a donation. There are over 100 top retailers to choose from. It all helps raise funds for the group.

Monthly Bulletin

"If you would like to receive this bulletin by email, then just send a request to news@stocktonmsgroup.org.uk.

Remember if you change your email address to let us know by sending a message to news@stocktonmsgroup.org.uk"

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Published by: Stockton MS Group, 74 Windermere Road, Stockton-on-Tees. TS18 4LY

Race Evening

On Friday 2nd November 2018 Stockton Cricket and Rugby Club will be holding a Charity Race Night, and Stockton MS Group will be one of the beneficiaries. Ticket prices will be announced nearer the time. For further information contact David on 07999-849340

www.bbc.co.uk 28 August 2018

Paralympian Anne Wafula-Strike left on plane for 45 minutes

A Paralympian says she was "neglected" and left to wait on a plane for 45 minutes before airport staff helped her.

Anne Wafula-Strike was on a Ryanair flight to Stansted on Friday and had booked assistance a month in advance.

However, when the plane landed two hours behind schedule she found herself waiting as the other passengers collected their bags and left.

Stansted said it was investigating the incident.

Mrs Wafula-Strike, 49, from Harlow in Essex, said: "I felt angry and very neglected, it's not good when you are abandoned on a flight and everyone else is picking up their bags and walking off. "That's the time you start to think 'I wish I could just walk like them and get my luggage and walk off the plane' but I have to rely on assistance to get off, it was bad."

When a staff member arrived to help the wheelchair racer she said they told her they were short staffed and had been unsure if her flight from Berlin had arrived.

Mrs Wafula-Strike said: "When someone like me speaks up or raises their voice people will think it is only happening to one or two people but it is becoming a common occurrence for people with disabilities to be left neglected on planes or not able to get into trains.

"These things should not be happening when men have walked on the moon.

Ryanair said a company called Omniserv was responsible for assisting disabled passengers at Stansted.

A spokesman for the airport added: "We are disappointed to hear about Anne's experience at Stansted on Friday evening.

"We are in the process of investigating how such a situation arose and have asked Omniserv, the company responsible for looking after passengers with reduced mobility, for a full explanation of why Anne had to wait for such a long time on the aircraft."

Mrs Wafula-Strike received a payout after being forced to wet herself on a train last year.

Earlier this month, the BBC security correspondent Frank Gardner said he had been left "stuck on an empty plane" at Heathrow Airport for a second time in six months.

DISCLAIMER

Articles in this Bulletin are meant for the sole purpose of information only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the committee.

Smarty pants: Robot trousers could keep the elderly mobile

Johnathan Rossiter proudly displays his new trousers. Brightly coloured and fit for the running track, but packing more than just Lycra. They'll be robotic.

"We are all going to get older and our mobility is going to reduce," he says. "What we want to do is give people that extra bit of boost, to maintain their independence as long as possible."

A team of British researchers thinks the future lies in wearable soft robotics. They've developed robotic muscles; air-filled bubbles of plastic that can raise a leg from a seated to a standing position.

Getting this technology into the trousers might be 10 years away, but it is set to give that added boost to our ability to stand and walk when we need it most.

Who wears the trousers?

Prof Rossiter, from the University of Bristol, explained that "there are about 10 million people in the UK with disabilities". This includes people with functional disability, but also those with mobility problems in old age.

By 2046, the proportion of people aged 65 and over could grow to nearly a quarter of the population. About 1.2 million people in the UK have had a stroke.

Many of these people will need mobility assistance. The problems experienced by people may be in walking, sitting and standing, but also with other day-to-day tasks like dressing.

Social services will be under increasing pressure to provide more carers and occupational therapy. This stimulated work by Prof Rossiter to use £2m of EPSRC funding to come up with robotic solutions that would improve on the conventional aids of walking stick/frames, wheel chairs, or mobility scooters.

Researchers were showcasing the technology and some of the clothing developed for the first time at this week's British Science Festival in Hull. Prof Rossiter told the BBC: "One of our goals is to replicate human muscle in an artificial form, so that you can sew them into your trousers and you've got your power trousers."

What technology is involved?

Prof Rossiter has teamed up with scientists from across the UK to bring together nanoparticle science, functional 3-D printing, smart material development and artificial muscle technology. "Soft robotics can make materials and structures that behave in a really sophisticated way in contrast to conventional robotics" said Prof Rossiter.

"We have evolved organisms that are so sophisticated in their movement in their sensing and in control, like the octopus, they can bend and twist can squeeze into small spaces. We can take some of these capabilities and put them into artificial muscles, put them onto clothing."

At the science festival, Prof Rossiter's team demonstrated the artificial muscles. To my eye, they look like strings of cocktail sausages made from clear plastic (that feels like carrier bag material) and can be inflated with air.

Once inflated, the whole structure contracts and shortens like muscle does, and the cocktail sausage shapes becomes round like baubles.

There is considerable power generated by the artificial muscle and I watched as the University of Bristol researcher demonstrated that this can raise a robotic leg from a seated to a standing position.

Another demonstration showed me a cuff of several air-filled long plastic sausages arranged around the knee area. Once inflated it became stiffer and more supportive to the knee. Prof Rossiter told me: "It means you can stand more comfortably."

"You need a cylinder of air in your back pocket and as you walk you get little 'phutts' of air as they actuate," said Rossiter.

They are potentially noisy to live with, but the vision the team is developing is one using electroactive polymers - materials that require electricity.

Prof Rossiter said this was "great, because you've got mobile phone batteries, lithium polymer batteries that you can put in your pocket".

He added: "With those, you have materials that you apply electricity to, and they contract like a muscle." And of course they would be silent.

Once incorporated into the trousers, there is scope for an embedded control system. The electroactive polymers themselves generate an electrical signal. Rossiter explains: "So we have this ability to measure someone's movement from the same materials that are also going to deliver the power to the person. The material is do the sensing, the computation, then they deliver the power to exactly the right place."

The technology might offer the potential of prolonged independent living, but a potential downside might be discouraging a person from using their own muscles, and then becoming weaker.

But as a rehabilitation device, it may be doing the opposite, Rossiter explains: "So that people who are weaker are becoming stronger, working with the device/trousers - they are exercise trousers making their legs stronger, their knees stronger."

Undoubtedly, the core technology has come on in leaps and bounds and they are putting it in to action. But the trousers are still just a pair of brightly coloured leggings - at least for the time being.

Style over substance?

They've also come up with air-driven waistbands to trousers which, at a push of a button, will allow trousers to loosen at the waist and drop to the floor. To great comic effect in the demo, but with real practical potential.

"People with functional incontinence just can't get to the toilet in time and end up using pads. That's a terrible change in their lifestyle, and we are trying to get around that as well," said Prof Rossiter.

The robotic clothes will need to be washable too.

And then there is the issue of style. It is debatable whether my 79-year-old dad, for example, would care to spend his time in multi-coloured Lycra. So they've got to look good - but to whose taste? This could mean that tights or other more discrete undergarments need to be developed with the technology.

Will they be hitting the high street soon?

"Our target is the kind of person that you or I, if we are relatively healthy, would become as we slowly get older," said Prof Rossiter

"The health service wants this. It is really good at realising that if you are going to interact with the human body, you probably want something that is soft... rather than one of these scary rigid exoskeletons."

The next phase of the team's work is going to involve working with clinicians, charities and prosthetic device companies.

Rossiter predicts that with the involvement of good design and manufacturing companies, the trousers could be available in 10 years.

But as Rossiter explained to BBC News: "It could be there is a smart knee-brace or a smart ankle brace or a smart pair of pants. So I see low-hanging fruit coming relatively quickly within a few years rather than having to wait for these actual trousers."

But first, there are quite a few problems remaining for these researchers to crack. Such as how to store enough energy in the trousers without it becoming too heavy and storing that energy for long periods of time. As Prof Rossiter points out "you don't want to walk up to the top of a hill and then find you can't get down the other side".

Supreme Court backs agreed end-of-life decisions

Legal permission will no longer be needed to withdraw treatment from patients in permanent vegetative state, the Supreme Court has ruled.

It will now be easier to withdraw food and liquid to allow such patients to die across the UK. When families and doctors are in agreement, medical staff will be able to remove feeding tubes without applying to the Court of Protection.

Lady Black ruled there was no violation under the Human Rights Convention.

Relatives who have faced the court process in the past said the ruling would help families dealing with a "tragic situation".

But anti-assisted dying campaigners said vegetative patients are "effectively going to be starved and dehydrated to death".

Previously the Court of Protection has ruled on cases but the process can take months or years, and it costs health authorities about £50,000 in legal fees to lodge an appeal.

The ruling could have an impact on the thousands of families whose loved ones are in a vegetative state.

There is estimated to be 1,500 new cases each year in England and Wales which would be affected, with about 3,000 of these patients alive at any one time.

The case was brought to the Supreme Court after a banker in his 50s suffered a heart attack, resulting in severe brain damage.

The man, known as Mr Y, was unresponsive after his heart attack last year and there was no chance of recovery.

His family and his doctors agreed it would be in his best interests to allow him to die by withdrawing his feeding tube.

The NHS trust asked the High Court to declare that it was not necessary to apply to the Court of Protection for a decision when the doctors and the family all believe it is in the patient's best interests.

The judge agreed, but the official solicitor appealed on behalf of Mr Y - an appeal which has now been dismissed.

Mr Y has since died but the case continued so that a court ruling could be made.

www.theguardian .com 8 August 2018

Travelling while disabled is hell. We need major change – and kindness

Every day brings news of novel, cruel and unusual indignities inflicted on a human daring to travel while disabled. In the latest demoralising example, Steve Smithers was prevented from flying for the crime of carrying spanners, in case he used them to "dismantle the plane" instead of adjusting his wheelchair. It would take a time-rich, engineering-genius-meets-world's strongest man to do that, not someone paralysed from the chest down.

I am disabled because of MS, which causes restricted mobility and impaired vision, both of which are worsened by stress. I dread travelling, even by bus. I can't fully see to flag down the correct one, and, boy, do Glaswegian drivers hate it when I explain why I stopped the wrong one. See me trying to count the exact change (mandatory in Glasgow) with my restricted vision, while an impatient driver snorts. And despite my walking stick, passengers hog seats near entrances reserved for the likes of me, spreading across two seats until asked to move.

Train journeys are an ordeal. When checking the departure platform, I am often gruffly directed to the information board, which is bit of a walk.

Worse, is being met with silence after asking a question. Silence, because I then say: “You’re pointing, aren’t you?” If I can’t see, what good is that? Don’t absentmindedly direct me on to the wrong train, as happened once when I called the rail company helpline. Steps on trains and at stations can be high: try hoisting yourself up steps, let alone carrying heavy luggage or shopping (fellow travellers rarely help).

What is life really like for disabled people? The Disability Diaries reveal all

Elsewhere, prohibitive rules can be callously, inappropriately and rigidly applied – occasionally, new ones are invented on the spot. I once encountered a German tourist on a train, who nervously asked for my advice. She had booked extra assistance in advance because of walking difficulties and, bless her, honestly believed that help would arrive. The ticket collector reassured her but nobody appeared. When we saw him walk away, we tapped the window. He smiled and waved cheerio.

I then asked station staff for assistance and we both watched in shock as a man slowly, deliberately (and unnecessarily) rolled out a ramp. Disabled means “ramp”, you see, even if you are deaf. I politely asked him to find a porter. Testily, he kept on unravelling that damn ramp, explaining righteously: “Excuse me, but I am helping a poor disabled lady.” He’d had training and everything. Desperate, she raced off for her connecting train after, eventually, someone sensible helped her with luggage and directions, but not, I suspect her blood pressure.

It’s not the same in every country. Travelling to Bilbao from Manchester airport with worse vision than I have now, but better mobility, I checked in and asked for help, but was abandoned and forced to fend for myself. Landing in Spain, the contrast was so marked that I felt like royalty. They collected my bag from the carousel and insisted on carrying it for me. They would, I suspect, happily have washed my feet had I asked. Later, at Barcelona airport, I was obligingly given the help I needed (directions, with added luggage carrying) but not patronised with a one size fits all ramp. Indeed, posters in Catalonia explain that helping disabled people benefits everyone; wheelchair ramps can be helpful to pram users, for example.

Major training and institutional change are required, but, mostly, kindness is needed. This extends to obvious and sensible requirements such as wheelchair adjustment spanners on planes, as well as generous assistance for people with multiple issues, including “invisible” disabilities (including mental health problems). Be kind and pleasant. Respect a passenger’s dignity; discreetly guide those who need such assistance to the lavatory (which will, of course, be clean and supplied with lavatory paper – oh, my innocent soul...). Don’t assume disabled equals ramp: if passengers ask for help with luggage, or directions to trains and planes, do it promptly and willingly, responding to individual needs.

Fellow passengers: look up from your phone and offer help. And companies, I am not asking for a golden carriage pulled by miniature Shetland ponies dyed green to match to my eyes. All I really need is a porter. www.mstrust.org.uk 30 August 2018

Ibudilast - positive results from early clinical trial in progressive MS

SPRINT-MS was a phase II study designed to assess the effectiveness and safety of ibudilast(MN-166) in people with progressive MS. 255 people with secondary and primary progressive MS took either ibudilast or placebo as tablets daily for nearly two years. MRI was used to measure brain volume at the beginning and end of the study. Compared to placebo, ibudilast slowed down the loss of brain volume (brain atrophy) by 48%.

Although the study wasn't looking at any effect on MS symptoms or the rate of progression, loss of brain volume is linked to cognitive and physical disability in MS and is used as a marker for MS progression. Ibudilast was generally well-tolerated. The most common side effects associated with ibudilast included gastrointestinal problems such as nausea, diarrhoea and abdominal pain, as well as depression and headache.

What next for ibudilast?

While these promising results indicate that ibudilast may slow down progression in MS, the drug will need to be tested in larger phase III clinical studies using more direct measures of disability such as mobility, hand/arm function and cognition.

More about ibudilast

Ibudilast is used in Japan and Korea to treat asthma and some complications of stroke. It acts on a number of cell processes associated with nerve damage and myelin repair. Previous studies have suggested it may have a neuroprotective effect.

www.bbc.co.uk 22 August 2018

Letting agents turn away tenants on housing benefits

Letting agents are discriminating against tenants on housing benefit, an undercover investigation has found.

Shelter and the National Housing Federation found one in 10 agents in England refused to let to those on the benefit.

The undercover investigation found the policy was enforced even if tenants could afford the rent.

Stephen Tyler told the BBC that housing benefit discrimination had forced him to sleep in his car.

The wheelchair user told the **BBC's Victoria Derbyshire programme**: "We have been trying to find accommodation since we were evicted from our last property when we asked for adaptations to be made for wheelchair access.

"I phone anything up to 20 landlords, estate agents, a day and none of them will accept DSS (tenants on Department of Social Security housing benefits)."

The Birmingham resident said he had approached his council as well as housing associations, but "no one wants to help at all".

A spokesman for Mr Tyler's local council, Birmingham City, said it had offered him "suitable alternative accommodation". It added: "While this is far from an ideal situation, and is no doubt distressing for Mr Tyler and his family, unfortunately we are faced with a national housing crisis that is affecting an unprecedented number of families across the region."

Ugly undercurrent

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said: "This ugly undercurrent of discrimination is wreaking havoc on hundreds of thousands of people's lives. 'No DSS' is an outdated and outrageous example of blatant prejudice."

The investigation into 149 regional letting agent branches found five of England's leading letting agents were discriminating against tenants on housing benefit, with Haart was the worst offender..

Mystery shoppers, deployed by the charities, had encountered a ban on housing benefit tenants in eight out of 25 Haart branches.

A spokesman for Haart said: "It is not our policy to refuse housing benefit tenants - anyone who passes referencing checks is able to rent properties listed with our branches. We do regularly arrange tenancies for those claiming housing benefits and currently have 112 tenancies where this is the case.

"This research has brought to light that some of our branches are misinformed and we are working to ensure that this policy is being followed across our network. We are sorry for any occasion where this has not been the case."

Branch policies

Others named as having individual branch policies not to accept people on housing benefit were Bridgfords (two out of 25 branches visited), Dexters (two out of 25), Fox & Sons (two out of 24) and Your Move (one out of 25).

Almost half of all branches called during the investigation said they had no suitable homes or landlords willing to let to someone on housing benefit, the report said.

The report claims that a shortfall in social housing means that an estimated 1.64 million adults rely on housing benefit to help cover private rents.

It said the majority were women, and especially single mothers with childcare responsibilities, while people who receive disability benefits were three times more likely to need a housing benefit top-up.

David Cox, chief executive of letting agents' body Arla Propertymark, said: "Rents are paid in advance, whereas housing benefit is paid in arrears, and therefore with such a shortage of rental accommodation, landlords and agents will naturally choose a tenant who can pay the rent when it is due, rather than a tenant who is always a month in arrears.

"We have called on government time and time again to resolve this problem. But our calls have fallen on deaf ears.

A Ministry of Housing spokesman said those on housing benefit who felt discriminated against could complain to redress schemes, which all letting and managing agent must be part of by law.

He added: "We are determined to tackle stigma in social housing and the private rented sector. Just last week we published our Social Housing Green Paper setting out our plans to rebalance the relationship between tenants and landlords."

www.bbc.co.uk 3 August 2018

Jet2 asks boy in mobility scooter to 'prove disability'

A 10-year-old disabled boy was made to prove he had a disability when an airline's administrative error put his flight in jeopardy, says his mother.

Alex Johnson said she was "appalled" with the "humiliating" treatment her son received at Split Airport, Croatia, getting a Jet2 flight home on Tuesday.

She said Jack, of Wigan, Greater Manchester, who has Duchenne muscular dystrophy, was "mortified". A spokesman for Jet2 said the firm was "extremely sorry".

Jack is the son of former Wigan Warriors, London Broncos, Castleford Tigers and Salford City Reds rugby league player Andy Johnson.

'So embarrassed'

Mrs Johnson said Jack and the rest of the family made "great memories" in Croatia but the holiday was "ruined" when they tried to check in on their return flight home to Leeds-Bradford Airport. She said although there was no issue on the outbound flight, staff at Split Airport appeared to have no record of Jack's disability and two days' notice had been required to put a motorised scooter on the aircraft.

Mrs Johnson said she was then asked in front of Jack: "Do you have proof your son is disabled?" She said she showed his blue badge in "disbelief"

YOUR JOKES

VERN'S FUNERAL

Vern works hard at the Phone Company but spends two nights each week bowling, and plays golf every Saturday. His wife thinks he's pushing himself too hard, so for his birthday she takes him to a local strip club.

The doorman at the club greets them and says, "Hey, Vern! How ya doin?"

His wife is puzzled and asks if he's been to this club before.

"Oh no," says Vern. "He's in my bowling league."

When they are seated, a waitress asks Vern if he'd like his usual and brings over a Budweiser. His wife is becoming increasingly uncomfortable and says, "How did she know that you drink Budweiser?"

"I recognize her, she's the waitress from the golf club. I always have a Bud at the end of the 1st nine, honey.."

A stripper then comes over to their table, throws her arms around Vern, starts to rub herself all over him and says... "Hi Vern. Want your usual table dance, big boy?"

Vern's wife, now furious, grabs her purse and storms out of the club.

Vern follows and spots her getting into a cab. Before she can slam the door, he jumps in beside her.

Vern tries desperately to explain how the stripper must have mistaken him for someone else, but his wife is having none of it. She is screaming at him at the top of her lungs, calling him every 4 letter word in the book..

The cabby turns around and says, 'Geez Vern, you picked up a real bitch this time.'

VERN'S FUNERAL WILL BE HELD THIS COMING FRIDAY.

A guy walked into a crowded bar, waving his upholstered pistol and yelled;

"I have a 45 Calibre Colt 1911 with a seven round magazine plus one in the chamber, and I want to know who's been sleeping with my wife."

A voice from the back called out "You need more Amo".

President Trump was walking out of the White House and headed toward his limo when a possible assassin stepped forward aiming a gun.

A secret service agent, new on the job, shouted, "Mickey Mouse!" This startled and distracted the would-be assassin who was captured.

Later, the secret service agent's supervisor took him aside and asked, "What in the hell made you shout Mickey Mouse?"

Blushing, the agent replied, "I got nervous. I meant to shout, 'Donald duck!' "

A young ventriloquist is touring Norway and puts on a show in a small fishing town.

With his dummy on his knee, he starts going through his usual dumb blonde jokes.

Suddenly, a blonde woman in the fourth row stands on her chair and starts shouting, "I've heard enough of your stupid blonde jokes. What makes you think you can stereotype Norwegian blonde women that way? What does the colour of a woman's hair have to do with her worth as a human being? Its men like you who keep women like me from being respected at work and in the community, and from reaching our full potential as people. Its people like you that make others think that all blondes are dumb! You and your kind continue to perpetuate discrimination against not only blondes, but women in general, pathetically all in the name of humor!"

The embarrassed ventriloquist begins to apologize, and the blonde interrupts yelling, "You stay out of this! I'm talking to that little shit on your lap."

MEMBERS COMPETITION

A £5 prize will be given to the member whose entry has the most correct answers. Even if you do not answer all the questions, send in those you have answered – you could still win!

- 1/ Which 2001 animated film has the tagline "The greatest fairy tale never told."?
- 2/ 'Mnemosyne' was the Greek goddess of what?
- 3/ Bakewell tarts are closely associated with a town in which British county?
- 4/ Which Michael Jackson single begins: '*There's a place in your heart / And I know that it is love*'?
- 5/ Which 'C' was a 19th century Polish composer?
- 6/ Betsy Ross is widely credited with making the first what in 1876?
- 7/ At which British theme park might you find Oblivion and Nemesis?
- 8/ Which is there more of in the universe?
a) Hydrogen b) Oxygen c) Nitrogen
- 9/ Which football team were known as the 'Biscuitmen' up until the 1980's?
- 10/ Which country had the Escudo as it's currency before the Euro?

Name:

Address:

Send Completed Forms To:

Mr D Henderson
74 Windermere Road
Stockton-on-Tees
Cleveland TS18 4LY

All entries to be received by the next social. The winner will be drawn from entries received with the highest number of correct answers.

Answers to last quiz:

1/ Twelve 2/ Rio De Janeiro 3/ Boat 4/ Seven 5/ Ticket to Ride 6/ May 7/ Pennsylvania
8/ Casino Royale 9/ Winston Graham 10/ 4258