

ROTARY CLUB OF ROMSEY TEST

MEETING 15th SEPTEMBER 2021

The meeting held at the British Legion Club in Romsey was chaired by our President Roger Shepherd and attended by 36 members and their partners and friends. Grace was given by Colin Staples. Stewards were Colin Staples and Stuart Wineberg. Speaker reception was undertaken by John Whitham. The speaker **Georgi Welch from Alzheimer's Research UK** was introduced by our president.

The meal consisted of braised steak with vegetables, with the usual puddings.

After the meal The Loyal Toast was proposed together with a toast to our guests.

A slide presentation on Dementia – The Facts, the Fiction and the Future, was made by Georgi Welch, particularly appropriate because next Tuesday is World Alzheimer Day. She asked what had been the cause of most deaths over the last eighteen months, the answer is Dementia.

A wide ranging talk started by covering the basic facts made the point that it was 1901 when the first person Augusté Deiter was diagnosed with the condition. Research since then has been extremely slow especially compared with the various forms of cancer. Although the total costs of dementia and its consequences are £26 billion- (twice the costs of cancers and heart disease combined), researchers into cancer outnumber Dementia researchers by a ratio of 4:1.

Dementia is an umbrella term for symptoms and personality changes caused by a range of degenerative diseases of the brain. Changes to different parts of the brain produce different effects, for example damage to the frontal lobes produces changes to emotions, vascular dementia produces memory loss disorientation and problems with communication. Altogether there are a wide range of symptoms which are indicators for dementia and there is no tick list to confirm a diagnosis.

There is as yet no cure but there are drugs which appear to be able to control the symptoms if these are diagnosed early enough and a new drug, **Aducanumab**, has been approved by the American FDA for use against certain types of Dementia and it may lead in due course to a more general treatment.

Diagnosis is difficult but the first step is to consult a GP who may then refer the patient to a Memory Clinic. The next stage, which is a much more expensive process, is an MRI scan. Georgi made the point that it is a difficult conversation to initiate, the rules for healthy living both for the potential patient and for the carer but it is important not to play down the problem or to put a brave face on things because early treatment gives better results.

The importance of genetics has not yet been established but the normal healthy living rules are best observed – No smoking, regular exercise, maintain a healthy weight, balanced diet, follow alcohol guidelines, control cholesterol and blood pressure.

There is much yet to learn about this condition and only by spending money on research can answers be found.

There was considerable interest in and personal stories about Dementia during a very lively Q and A session.

John Witham gave the vote of thanks.

Alzheimer's Society - call 0300 222 1122 or email enquiries@alzheimers.org.uk