

FEBRUARY 2014



A word from the chair

Thanks to all of you who managed to take time out to attend our vitamin D conference, last month. I hope that those of you who were there would agree that it was a tremendously informative day and we were so lucky to have such an impressive panel of speakers.

Of course it won't come as a complete surprise that the real powerhouse behind the whole event was Oliver Gillie who has spent months working on the event, along with the redoubtable Christine Webber! Unfortunately, Oliver wasn't well enough to attend the conference but, being Oliver, it hasn't stopped him writing about it – and vitamin D! So, although we have included a brief report on the conference, right, do click on www.healthwriters.com to discover how an ever growing number of doctors, nurses and students are discovering the power of vitamin D.

Meanwhile a huge thanks must go to Christine for being truly magnificent on the day – pulling it all together, liaising with the speakers – and keeping the audience in check. I hope you'll agree it was a formidable start to the year for The Guild and, with your help, we hope to go from strength to strength.

Michele

Vitamin D Day!

Despite the weather, almost 100 people attended The Guild's prestigious conference, held at the King's Fund in London



Above: Academics, dietitians, science and health writers attended the one-day conference. Below: Leanne Oliver from the Vitamin D Mission, sponsors of the event

The Guild's Vitamin D and Health event in January

was a day packed with information, learning, and a host of vitamin D experts, ready and willing to share their knowledge.

After an introduction from Dr Leanne Oliver, of the Vitamin D Mission, paediatrician Dr Benjamin Jacobs talked about why we are seeing a resurgence of rickets, followed by retired Child Health lecturer, Dr Robert Moy, describing how the My Little Ray of Sunshine scheme is helping to conquer rickets in Birmingham.

Edinburgh GP Dr Helga Rhein explained that 80% of the Scottish population is vitamin D deficient, and how supplementation can help. Dr Adrian Martineau, Barts and the London School of Medicine, talked



about vitamin D in evolution, and how it may protect against TB.

Jacqueline Lowdon, Paediatric Dietitian, discussed the pros and cons of food fortification before Professor Zulf Mughal, Consultant in Paediatric Bone Disorders, gave a whistlestop history tour of rickets, from Egyptian mummies to the present day.

Diabetes expert Dr Barbara Boucher put the case that adequate levels of vitamin D would reduce the risk of types

Vitamin D Day cont'd

1 and 2 diabetes. Dr Robyn Shea, of Birmingham City Hospital discussed the results of the vitamin D test offered to journalists. Levels ranged from 23.7nmols per litre (deficient) to 223.1 (high). Even a small amount of supplementary vitamin D could push levels up to adequate (50-220nmol/l).

Dr Ruth Dobson of Barts Hospital and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry explored MS and the birthday lottery. Our month and place of birth, among other factors, are linked to lower levels of vitamin D and a higher risk of MS. Dr Graeme Close, from Liverpool John Moore's University, discussed how athletes, despite spending a lot of time outdoors,

will be vitamin D deficient at some point in the year. This includes footballers and jockeys.

Dr Colin Michie, consultant paediatrician at Ealing NHS Trust, talked about the role of vitamin D and teeth. His talk started with the Boer War, where healthy teeth were vital for fighting men, and how cod liver oil made all the difference. It ended with rickets in Ealing, where there were more cases in 2000-2010, than in the previous 30 years.

The day ended with our expert panel taking Qs & As from the audience. All in all, it was a fascinating and revealing event which, we hope, gave our audience much to think – and write – about.

● *Contributions from: Patsy Westcott, Fiona Bugler and Jean Elgie. A longer version and speaker presentations will be available from The Guild Office. Please contact Jatinder for more information.*



● *We would very much like to thank the Vitamin D Mission for sponsoring this event. We would also like to extend a big thank you to the Guild Vice Chair, Christine Webber, for so ably – and charmingly – chairing this hugely successful day.*

Calling all those who took up the offer of a free vitamin D blood test!

Did you attend the Guild's vitamin D conference in January and receive a free blood test to check your vitamin D status? If so, could you help with our research? All you have to do is complete a short, anonymous survey at the top of:

www.agewatch.org.uk

We'll be publishing our findings, so your help would be much appreciated.

Michael Baber, Age Watch

Who's who on our vitamin D panel



Dr Benjamin Jacobs
Consultant Paediatrician,
Royal National
Orthopaedic Hospital



Dr Robert Moy
retired senior lecturer in Child Health
and consultant to Feeding
for Life Foundation



Dr Helga Rhein
specialist GP,
Edinburgh



Dr Adrian Martineau
Barts and the London
School of Medicine



Jacqueline Lowdon
Chief Paediatric Dietician,
Manchester Children's Hospital and
Chair of British Dietetic Association



Professor Zulf Mughal
Consultant in Paediatric Bone
Disorders, Royal Manchester
Children's Hospital



Dr Barbara Boucher
Emeritus Researcher at the Institute
of Cell and Molecular Science,
Queen Mary College, London



Dr Robyn Shea
Birmingham City Hospital



Dr Ruth Dobson
of the London School of
Medicine and Dentistry and
Barts Hospital



Dr Graeme Close
Reader in Applied Physiology
and Nutrition, Liverpool
John Moore's University



Dr Colin Michie
consultant paediatrician
Ealing NHS Trust

Vit D Day: your feedback

■ **'Congratulations to you and all those involved in arranging the vitamin D conference. This was the best Guild conference I have attended. The programme/location/facilities/catering were all excellent!'**

Alan Burns

■ **'A big thanks to you and all who organised today's session which was great.'**

Mary-Claire Mason

■ **'Just a quick note to say a huge thank you for your hard work in putting today together. it was hugely professional, extremely enlightening and a great day all round!'**

Joy Skipper

■ **'I really enjoyed the conference. The range of speakers was good and the lunch was excellent.'**

Dr Chris Fenn

■ **'I just wanted to say thank you for a really informative conference yesterday – the speakers were excellent and it was massively informative!'**

Siobhan Hallmark, National Osteoporosis Society

■ **'Many thanks for an excellent day yesterday. I thought the programme was superb and the quality of speakers was extremely high. Despite knowing a fair bit about the subject already I found I learned a lot.'**

Mike Wakeman



Need help with a complaint?

Lesley Dobson reports on Health Ombudsman, Dame Julie Mellor's exclusive invite to the Guild members

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman could be the most useful government department you've never heard of. It was

set up to look into complaints about government departments, public organisations and the NHS in England. What's more, their service is free.

The current ombudsman, Dame Julie Mellor, and her team invited Guild Members to join them for an informal briefing in November last year. Here's a quick guide to what the Ombudsman's office does with complaints about the NHS, and how her team can help our readers.

Before contacting the Ombudsman's office with a complaint you must have made a complaint to the NHS organisation involved, as soon as possible. If you need help at this stage, contact your local Healthwatch to discover how to contact your NHS complaints advocacy provider in your area.

● **Healthwatch is:** www.healthwatch.co.uk or **Healthwatch England is:** 03000 683 000

You then have to wait for the NHS to give you their response.

If you aren't happy with how the NHS organisation has handled your complaint you can contact the Health Service Ombudsman.

Legally, anyone with a complaint against an NHS organisation should take their problem to the Health Service Ombudsman (HSO) within a year of it happening. This does depend on the local NHS dealing with the complaint in that time, but the HSO may still help if you have valid reasons why your complaint was late.

There's much more information on the site, and specifically in the leaflet **'What to do if you're unhappy with the NHS'** which you can download as a pdf. There's even a section on the website, with more leaflets to download, on what to do if you have a complaint about the HSO, or the way your complaint was handled. Now that is impressive.

- **The Ombudsman's website is:** www.ombudsman.org.uk
- **Their complaints phone number is:** 0345 015 4033
- **The press office is:** www.ombudsman.org.uk/about-us/news-centre/the-press-office and: press@ombudsman.org.uk
- **Or call them on:** 0300 061 4220 or 0300 061 4996 during office hours.

Meet Dr Carol Cooper

We're delighted to welcome Dr Carol Cooper, doctor, medical writer and novelist, as the Guild's new President



MATTSMITHPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

As a medical writer (among other things), our new President has personal experience of the benefits that come from being a Guild member. 'The Guild does a great job in so many different ways,' says Carol Cooper. 'It provides a protective umbrella for health writers. It's easy to become isolated or stuck in your own niche, whether you're freelance, on staff, or a book writer, so it's really good to feel that you're a part of the Guild.'

Writing has long been an important part of Carol's life. 'I've always written. When I was a child I'd write stories about witches burning to death because they smoked in bed – probably the forerunner of the stories I write for The Sun now. And when I was a student I wrote music reviews – it was a great way of going to gigs for free.

'Going into general practice spurred me to become a medical writer. The whole rich pageant of human life is there. And if you write about health and medicine it makes you reflect, and it's also good stress release.'

Carol didn't know she wanted to be a doctor until quite late, swapping her physics course for medicine at the end of her first

year at university. 'I then decided I wanted to be a GP when I started thinking about having a family.

'One of my best career decisions was turning down the offer of a nearly full-time partnership in a GP practice. That would have been a very full-time commitment, and with three small children I wouldn't have had time to write as well. It was the right choice. We're all afraid of saying no to opportunities, but spreading yourself too thin is never a good idea.

'Writing satisfies my creative side. I've written on serious topics, and on more light-hearted ones, including my novel. Whatever the style, it's still about creating something and crafting a message, and that's what I enjoy most.'

Carol is still a practising GP, and teaches medical students at Imperial College Medical School. She writes for The Sun, Tesco's parenting magazines and booklets and a variety of other newspapers and magazines.

As well as a range of parenting and children's books Carol has co-authored an award-winning book 'General Practice at a Glance' for medical students and junior doctors. Her first novel 'One Night at the Jacaranda' is about dating, and is available on Amazon.



● Dr Carol Cooper is a prolific author

MEMBERS' NEWS



Congratulations

to Guild member, **HILARY FREEMAN**, who won the **MS Media Coverage of the Year Award** for an article published in **You Magazine**



Dr Tom Smith has recently written, **Physical Intelligence.**

● *Published by Sheldon Press.*

Sugar and fat are big news in the media –

But which one is worse? Which should we cut and what should we really eat to improve our health? asks **CHARLOTTE STIRLING-REED**. If you want to know more on this story, her blog, link below, aims to answer this question.

● <http://www.snutrition.co.uk/2014/01/sugar-vs-fat-the-very-big-debate>



MAGGIE LA TOURELLE

writes a monthly blog about Alzheimer's. Just click on the link below to read her latest post:

● <http://www.thegiftofalzheimers.com/blog/>

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to:

FULL MEMBERS

CLAIRE FOX

Food editor/senior health writer, Top Santé

TRISH LESSLIE

Freelance

JESSICA POWELL

Acting Features Editor, Top Santé

NATALIA LUBOMIRSKI

Editorial Assistant/Staff Writer, Top Santé

SHOSHANA GOLDBERG

Deputy Editor, Top Santé

JANE DRUKER

Editor, Top Santé

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

MIKE WAKEMAN

Freelance Healthcare Consultant

HELEN WELDON

Qualified Nutritional Therapist with experience of writing on health and wellbeing.

SAVE THE DATE

Please join us for the GHW's very special 20th anniversary AGM

DATE: Tuesday 25 March 2014

WHERE: The Medical Society, Lettsom House, 11 Chandos St, London W1G 9EB

TIME: Registration 6pm, AGM 6.30 start

Guest speaker: Our new President, Dr Carol Cooper, who will talk about self publishing and how to build your brand

MEMBERS' NEWS



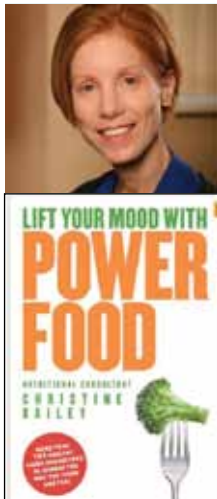
SAVE THE DATE!

THE GUILD IS
20 YEARS OLD
THIS YEAR!

We are looking forward to celebrating
with you at our very special
summer birthday party!

Thursday, 10 JULY, 2014

More information to follow in the next issue of Healthwriter...



Associate Member, Nutritionist and Chef,
CHRISTINE BAILEY, has a new book out, **Lift Your Mood With Power Food** – More Than 150 Healthy Recipes To Change The Way You Think And Feel. This reveals the surprising link between diet and mental health, and how healthy eating can lead you from lethargy to a happy, energetic new lifestyle.

Christine is also running a range of healthy cookery days including a **Hands on Day for Children** – Healthy Easter Treats (gluten and dairy free)

● See www.advancenutrition.co.uk

CAROLE BECK has launched a health and parenting blog called **Healthier Mummy** about trying to lead a healthier family life.

● www.healthiermummy.com



THE GUILD OF HEALTH WRITERS

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