

SAVE THE DATE

**6 FEBRUARY 2017**

## The Anxiety Epidemic

Don't miss **The Anxiety Epidemic**. Our next event is supported by Heads Together, the campaign to end the stigma of mental health problems founded by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry, and sponsored by Kalms. **Time:** 6pm prompt for registration (tbc)  
**Venue:** Chandos House, London W1G 9LQ (See page 2 for more details)

## Carbs, cals and Type 2 diabetes: reversing a modern pandemic

The increasingly contentious subject of what constitutes the best diet for people with Type 2 diabetes (T2D) fuelled a lively panel discussion among leading experts, patients and Guild members at 'Can diet cure diabetes?' at the King's Fund, London, on 30 November.

The word cure was the first thing to be questioned. Although some of the GPs, patients and experts present had reversed the condition, they all agreed diet and lifestyle cannot 'cure' diabetes, even though they have the power to put it in remission so that drugs are no longer needed.

The event, chaired by Guild member Jane Feinmann, opened with a presentation on the role of a low-carbohydrate diet by Dr David Unwin FRCGP, a GP in Southport, where he has looked after the same community for 30 years.

He described how working with patients on their diet has turned his job from "handing out tablets and telling people off" to "being fun...with patients thanking me every day. No-one ever thanked me for prescribing them metformin."

When diagnosed with T2D, his



The Guild is known for its lively parties as much for lively debates, see p4-5

PHOTOGRAPH: JASON BYE

patients are offered a three-month trial of weight loss on a low carbohydrate diet. Over the years, he has come to believe that people with T2D struggle to metabolise glucose, so a low carb diet makes a lot of sense.

"So often people are unaware of the amount of glucose that results from the digestion of starchy foods like bread," he said. Dr Unwin's results have been impressive – patients reversing their T2D (one in only 38 days) or pre-diabetes, losing an average of nine kilograms.

This has also meant spending £50,000 less each year on insulin and T2Diabetes drugs compared with others in Southport and Formby –

while achieving better care in terms of haemoglobin A1c results.

The theme was picked up by Roy Taylor, Professor of Medicine and Metabolism at Newcastle University, who talked about how he has developed a 'twin cycle' theory of T2D, involving the liver and the pancreas, aided by advanced imaging techniques that allow the study of fat deposition around these organs. Prof Taylor's work shows that a very low calorie diet can reverse T2D and the results of a large scale clinical trial of this approach, DiRECT, supported by Diabetes UK, are eagerly awaited.

Bruce Griffin, Professor of Nutritional Metabolism, University

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**INSIDE: Christmas Party, p4&5 ■ Guild survey interim findings, p8**

For further information on Members' News and forthcoming events visit: [www.healthwriters.com](http://www.healthwriters.com)

## Type 2 diabetes: reversing a modern pandemic

of Surrey, shifted the focus, by shedding light on the confusing topic of eggs, cholesterol and heart disease. The latest research reveals that there is no association between egg consumption and the development of T2D – so eggs can continue to be a valuable source of protein in a healthy diet

Dr Trudi Deakin, Chief Executive and Research Dietitian at X-PERT Health (a charity providing evidence-based education for the prevention and management of diabetes in the NHS), returned to the topic of carbohydrate with a plea to get away from the ‘one size fits all’ approach to nutrition. Individual guidance on diet, working with the patient, is more productive. Small, sensible changes – healthy fats are fine, but only till you feel full, moderate amounts of healthy proteins, more berries and non-starchy veg – were among her recommendations.

Anthony Whittington introduced the patient’s point of view. Anthony, and brother Ian, are the team behind *FIXING DAD*, the inspiring documentary which tells the story of their efforts to help their father Geoff, who has Type 2 diabetes.

“The language and narrative of diabetes are overwhelmingly negative,” he said. The family’s work, which has reversed Geoff’s



Our panel: clockwise from top left: David Unwin, Roy Taylor, Bruce Griffin, Partha Kar and Trudi Deakin

condition, has led them to believe that “there is too little attention paid to food in the NHS and we have a food industry that pays too little attention to health.” (see below)

Finally, Dr Partha Kar, Associate National Clinical Director, Diabetes, at NHS England, and Consultant in Diabetes & Endocrinology at Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust, spoke about some of the confusion and uncertainties that surround the topic of

T2D for both the public and healthcare professionals.

“We need a fusion of evidence and experience,” he said, making a plea for “calm, level-headed discussion” and less of the “you’re with me or against me” attitude, when it comes to the sometimes controversial topic of diet and diabetes.

From this event, it was clear that there is conflict over government guidelines, which advise higher amounts of carbohydrate than the latest research, which promotes a low carb and moderate to high fat and protein diet. Dr Kar pointed out that official guidance tends to lag long behind research findings and advice could change if convincing new evidence was presented to NHS England..

In conclusion, our role as health writers is to present this evidence in a balanced way, contributing to the diet and diabetes debate in a way that helps people make informed decisions.

### Fixing Dad – the book

Learn more about how the Whittington family tackled the challenge of Type 2 diabetes in this inspiring book, written by Anthony’s wife Jen. See: [www.fixingdad.com](http://www.fixingdad.com) #fixingdad



● The Guild of Health Writers thanks British Egg Information Service for their generous sponsorship of this event and would like to state that this seminar is an independent event. In accordance with its objectives, the Guild aims to provide a balanced, non-partisan forum for discussion and does not endorse any commercial products.

SAVE THE DATE

## How to cope with the Anxiety Epidemic

A third of Britons will experience anxiety disorder at some stage in their lives, with a huge increase of reported anxiety among teenagers and young adults.

Anxiety has always been part of the human condition but never on the present scale.

Experts, including Paul Farmer CBE, CEO of Mind and Chair of the independent Mental Health Task Force, will discuss why anxiety and related mental health problems

are now reaching epidemic proportions, how they can best be treated and also measures aimed at reducing the scale of the problem.

The event is supported by Heads Together, the campaign by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry to end the stigma of mental health problems, and sponsored by Kalms.

● **The Anxiety Epidemic, 6 February, 6pm prompt for registration (tbc), Chandos House, London W1G 9LQ**

**JO WATERS** is a freelance journalist contributing to national newspapers, magazines, websites and “anyone else who pays me”. She also writes health books and blogs, covers medical conferences, as well as offering media training and consultancy. She was Chair of the Guild between 2011 and 2013. Jo started her career in local newspapers, moved onto the medical trade press and became news editor of *GP* before switching to women’s magazines, working as features editor on *Pregnancy and Birth* and *Top Santé* magazines and contributing health Editor for *Yours* magazine. She is a regular contributor to the *Daily Mail* Good Health section.

### What are you working on now?

I’m writing a feature about stammering for the *Daily Mail*. It’s got all the key elements of an interesting health story, including two very moving personal stories which brought tears to my eyes and some great experts with a new take on a common problem.

### How has your work changed over the years?

I started work in 1986 and walked into a newsroom full of blokes smoking amid the clatter of typewriters. I loved it from day one. District reporters used to send copy to head office on the bus! Now I work from home; research is so much easier to do, but I miss the interaction and banter you get in a newsroom. There are so many more outlets for journalism too, although the big worry is many don’t pay.

## a DAY in the LIFE of ...



### Of what achievement are you most proud?

I love to hear from a reader who says something I’ve written has helped them get a diagnosis and changed their life – or sometimes even saved it. That’s job satisfaction for me.

### What are the best and worst things about being a freelance?

The best thing about freelancing is the variety and the flexibility of the work. I’m never bored and love learning new things all the time. In theory it gives you a better work/life balance too, so it’s great if you have kids. The flip side is that work does intrude on your home life – but it’s the price you have to pay. The worst thing is the whole feast or

famine situation. You’re either rushed off your feet or waiting for the phone to ring. I try to relax and enjoy a quiet spell but, by the end of the week, I’m a mess and looking at teacher training courses, convinced I’ll never get another commission!

### What are your work-related ambitions?

To keep working, writing interesting features, talking to fascinating people and making enough money to get my daughters through university.

### What tips and insights can you share with the Guild?

Just keep on keeping on. Be tenacious about getting the best possible story you can. Editors notice when you go the extra mile, and then they come back for more. Think about all the small ways you can make the piece better. Get the most up-to-date stats, find out who the leading experts are, look into the research and do all this with your reader in your head.

### And, finally, how do you relax when you’re not working?

I love walking my wheaten terrier Poppy every day in the woods near where I live. I’m a summertime gardener, anything fragrant is crammed into my garden. I love cooking too – lots of people sitting round our garden table, lit by fairy lights, is my perfect evening.

● Jo’s new book *What’s Up With Your Gut?* co-written with Prof Julian Walters, is published by Hammersmith Press.

The Guild has ended 2016 on a high, with two sell-out events – our expert panel on diet and diabetes and the amazing Christmas Party at Dukes Hotel. Read all about them here.

We also present the interim findings of our survey on what you do – and do not – want from the Guild. Hopefully, this will enable us to tailor events and services to your needs in 2017. We start the year with a very special event on mental health, focusing specifically on anxiety and shedding some much-needed light on this often-neglected health topic – please mark 6 February in your diary now, and watch out for more information.

## Letter from the Editor



Finally, Michele Simmons is standing down as Co-Chair to concentrate on other projects. The good news is that she is staying on the committee and still working hard on forthcoming events. I’d like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Guild, to thank Michele for all her hard work and dedication during her time as Co-Chair and to wish her well for the future. We welcome Sarah Stacey as our new Co-Chair and know we will benefit hugely from Sarah’s experience and contacts. Merry Christmas and all the best for 2017. Susan



# Best foot forward into 2017

**Huge thanks** to FitFlop, and especially to founder Marcia Kilgore, for sponsoring our splendid Christmas networking party to celebrate the past year and get us ready to welcome in a wonderfully healthy and happy 2017.



Since their launch in 2007, FitFlop sandals – and their spinoff sneakers, boots and pumps – have become known worldwide, with their tag line ‘Beauty, brains and biomechanics’. Online reviews are testament to their

comfort and, for some wearers, an apparent effect in health problems from plantar fasciitis to pelvic pain.

FitFlops look cute as well, which is all to the good in persuading people to don footwear that keeps their feet happy and helps align the rest of their bodies too.

Sadly, work commitments around the globe prevented Marcia from being at the Guild party, but FitFlop was ably represented by Katie Neiman, Special Projects Manager.



The great raffle draw: Sarah Stacey and Katie Neiman



Above: Emma Hibbs, centre, with fellow partygoers



Left: Jane Feinmann and Alan Burns



Right: Helen Cowan, left, and Frances Ive



Above: Judy Hobson and Danny Buckland



The Guild committee in party mood: clockwise from left, Michele Simmons, Janette Marshall, Lee Rodwell, Jatinder Dua, Sarah Stacey, Susan Aldridge, Charlotte Haigh McNeil, Corinne Swainger and Janet Horwood

Below: from left, Jatinder Dua, Mary-Claire Mason and Michele Simmons

Below right: Denise Barrett



Above: Michele Simmons, Oliver Bowes and Katie Neiman; above right: Lee Rodwell, Gill Jacobs, Jane Dean and Francis Ive



**Thank you FitFlop and a Happy New Year to everyone!**





## EVENT: THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE AND THE WAY FORWARD

# Technology that transforms lives

The future of many stroke victims in the UK is all too often one of disability and loss of speech and movement leaving them in need of permanent care, said Dr Kyriakos Lobotesis, Consultant Neuroradiologist, Charing Cross Hospital, London.

Yet if more doctors were trained in mechanical thrombectomy, which uses a combination of imaging and technical skill to extract stroke-causing blood clots from the brain thus restoring blood supply and function, many patients would return to a normal life.

Recognising the potential of the technique Dr Lobotesis went to France to work and train. In France, and many other countries, mechanical thrombectomy is a far more common 'life-saving' treatment for stroke, giving individual patients their lives back and saving hundreds of thousands of pounds in life-long medical and social care.

Dr Lobotesis was speaking at *The Future of Medicine*, an event hosted in November by Medtronic, the leading medical technology company, in the elegant surroundings of the Royal College of General Practitioners, London.

While new drugs often generate big headlines in the media, advances in medical technology – such as those used by Dr Lobotesis – tend to get less coverage, explained Jon Pike, Medtronic's Head of PR and Communications. So *The Future of Medicine*, which showcased Medtronic's work in this area, was a real learning experience for Guild members, and the Medical Journalists' Association.

The case histories and associated 'before' and 'after' images shown by Dr Lobotesis during his description of mechanical thrombectomy were impressive. Some patients were still



**Technology the key: Top, Dr Choudhary addresses the audience; right, Medtronic staff explain an advanced machine**



relatively young and would otherwise have faced years of disability. Instead, after the procedure, they could get up and walk free from the hospital.

Dr Pratik Choudhary, Consultant in Diabetes, King's College Hospital, London, spoke about the latest diabetes technology – insulin pumps, continuous glucose monitoring and the closed-loop/'artificial pancreas' – which take

**Is there an opportunity here for Guild members to raise awareness with a story or investigation?**

over much of the burden of managing Type 1 diabetes from the patient, allowing better glucose control, quality of life and, potentially, a lower risk of long-term complications.

"For the new patient, using a pump and CGM for glucose control can be likened to driving with your eyes open, rather than blindfolded," Dr Choudhary explained.

What both these medical technologies have in common is that they are not used on the NHS nearly as widely as they should be, given the gains they offer in healthcare savings, patient quality of life and long-term outcomes. "We are one of the worst countries in Europe for delivering mechanical thrombectomy," said Dr Lobotesis.

Medical technology covers so much more than diabetes and stroke. Before and after the presentations, we had a chance to wander around exhibition stalls featuring the latest medical technologies to alleviate heart disease, mobility problems and Parkinson's disease (for more information, contact [jon.pike@medtronic.com](mailto:jon.pike@medtronic.com)).

These stalls were run by Medtronic experts who were happy to discuss and demonstrate all these products. All this, accompanied by an excellent buffet with wine, made for an enjoyable and thought-provoking event.

# Impact of health IT in reducing errors

Digital health writer, **Radhika Narayan**, highlights an issue of interest to members who write about hospitals and healthcare

**Errors in** the practice of medicine are not new. Apart from human errors, such as misdiagnosis and incorrect medication, problems caused by faulty medical devices, uncoordinated care and illegible clinical documentation, and so on, cannot be ruled out.

A few years ago, the headline 'NHS errors mean 8 patients die a day'<sup>1</sup> grabbed the attention of readers. Even for such an important topic, the mainstream media often gets coverage of these reports wrong, by failing to convey the complexity surrounding these events and to pinpoint contributing factors.

The reliability of cited statistics comes into question, as reports publish conflicting numbers. For example, the Institute of Medicine reports 440,000 deaths per year<sup>2</sup> due to medical errors.

However, a recent study<sup>3</sup> in the *BMJ* reports almost half of that, at 250,000 deaths per year. Some of these reports have been challenged for their statistical inaccuracy and insufficiency of data<sup>4</sup>. All this suggests that real-world patient safety reporting is necessary.

As efficient health writers, we should look at safety strategies in hospitals, as well as the errors themselves. Health IT can be thought of as one such safety strategy. Digital health is becoming one of the powerful tools for increasing patient safety while minimizing medical errors. As writers, we can:



- Gather stories of instances of medical errors from original sources that can help guide health care providers to examine the causes and consequences of such errors.

- Suggest actionable advice through scientifically curated content and recommend digital health tools to combat medical errors.

- Publish information about how to use different electronic devices and digital workflows that can help reduce medical errors.

- Be active on on-line health IT community hubs and help readers brainstorm strategies that help to reduce medical errors.

- Make our stories more effective, by working closely with hospitals and their health IT experts to understand how they work.

- Gather success stories of health facilities that have significantly reduced medical errors in medication management using IT systems.

Such original stories can inspire readers and ring a bell on steps that they can possibly adopt to reduce medical errors. As writers our focus should be on the 'Why' and 'How' of the problem rather than the 'Who'. The crux is to write stories and blog posts that inspire readers to eliminate medical errors and not just reporting them.

### References:

1. [www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jun/21/jeremy-hunt-nhs-errors-patients](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jun/21/jeremy-hunt-nhs-errors-patients)
2. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK2673/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK2673/)
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4. [www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jun/03/medical-error-study-cause-of-death-criticized](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jun/03/medical-error-study-cause-of-death-criticized)

## The Guild Survey: a progress report

The Guild is renowned for holding events that excite, inform and very importantly provide inspiration for stories, such as *Can Diet Cure Diabetes?* (page 1) – but in order to plan for the future we need to know more about our members and the kind of activities you would like.

That's why the Guild committee decided to email you all, inviting you to take part in our online survey via Survey Monkey. All the information you provide will be kept anonymous but it will help us to make sure the Guild is working in the right way for its members.

At the time of going to press we had received 57 replies – about 38 per cent. As survey stats go, that's quite respectable – but it is still less than half of our membership. Here are some of the findings from those who have already responded:

- The majority – 89 per cent – are freelance.
- 68 per cent are happy for events to be held in the evening although 52 per cent would like events at lunchtime.
- The idea of weekend events is not popular – with 28 per cent for but 40 per cent against.

- The most common reason people gave for not attending an event was that they lived too far away or that it clashed with another engagement.

- However, 18 per cent said it hadn't interested them and 16 per cent said it wouldn't get them any work.

- 73 per cent said they would like to see more workshops and 53 per cent want more networking events with Guild members.

People also suggested ideas for future workshops. These included:

- How to get an agent and approach a publisher
- How to negotiate a fee, then get paid – and what to do if you're not
- How to do a podcast
- How to work in a digital world and maximise SEO (search engine optimisation)

So ... many thanks to those of you who filled in the survey and a plea to those who haven't, please do so as soon as possible. If any of you have lost the original email from Jatinder, can't access the survey, or have any other problem, please contact us at [admin@healthwriters.com](mailto:admin@healthwriters.com) or on 020 8941 2977.

### @HealthWritersUK

#### Can you Tweet for the Guild?

The Guild has been busy promoting members' work, our workshops, seminars and other events, and has built up a following of 1,780 while a Twitter account has been run on our behalf.

We now urgently need a member to take over the tweeting on behalf of the Guild and its members. If you are not familiar with

the Guild's tweets you need to know that currently we tweet, and re-tweet, at least every other day.

Topics are current health stories in the media, but more importantly members' features and work. This could be shared between two members – maybe you know another member who could take over when you are on holiday, for example. Or you could do a week on and a week off. Whatever suits. Please contact Jatinder at [admin@healthwriters.com](mailto:admin@healthwriters.com)

## GUILD COMMITTEE

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Honorary Co-Chair

**Sarah Stacey**  
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**Dr Meg Arroll**

Lecturer, author and blogger on menopause, chronic fatigue and other health/psychology topics

**Emma Hibbs**  
Health Editor at *Spirit & Destiny* magazine who writes on natural health, nutrition, wellbeing and psychology

## We need your news

Let's have a bumper Members' News section in the next issue! What have you been up to? Got a new book out or taking on a different role? Tell us and we'll print it.

## The Guild of Health Writers

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Members are very welcome to contribute to *The Health Writer* and to submit ideas for events and workshops. Copy deadline for next newsletter: 30 January, 2017.

This newsletter is sponsored by an educational grant from Viridian Nutrition, the vitamin company with an organic heart.

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[www.viridian-nutrition.com](http://www.viridian-nutrition.com)