

## My experience with the Gloucestershire Mobile Chemotherapy Unit

### Background

My problem first came to light when I was sent one of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Kits – sometimes known as ‘poo’ sticks! I had done my first test in 2007 and that was quite satisfactory. Two years after in early July 2009 I received another test kit in the mail and sent it back a couple of days later. To my surprise I heard back from the test centre within a few days asking me to complete a second test because there had been a problem with the first test. After a further few days I received a letter saying that an appointment had been made for me to investigate the problem at Cheltenham Hospital. Needless to say it was a huge surprise to me. A follow-on appointment was made for me to undergo a colonoscopy at Cheltenham and I received the results about 2 weeks later. I was really shocked to be told that a polyp that had been removed during the colonoscopy was cancerous – after all, I had had no symptoms at all. They must have made a mistake! But no they hadn't.

### The Operation

Things happened really quickly after that. I had a CT scan and a sigmoidoscopy and I was told that I would be operated on on 28 Sept to remove the section of colon where the cancerous tissue had been found. This was done successfully and I was subsequently told that because one of the lymph nodes associated with that part of my colon was cancerous, I would need a period of chemotherapy.

### The Chemotherapy Treatment

This started in early November, just 4 months after starting the ‘poo’ sticks test. My first treatment session had to take place in Cheltenham hospital in case there were any problems. I was now in the hospital ‘machine’ – after seeing the surgeon and oncologist with minimal delays in previous weeks, I had to wait for over 1½ hours after my appointment time to start my first treatment, and that took over 3½ hours! Coupled with a 45 minute journey each way meant it was a pretty full and tiring day.

### The MCU

When Lion Dave Sharp became the President of the Lechlade & District Lions Club in July 2009, he persuaded the Club to support the Hope for Tomorrow Charity during his year as President. I had not even heard of the Charity at that stage!

During my first chemo session I asked if I could use the MCU at Cirencester Hospital for the rest of my treatment, and thankfully the hospital agreed. On arrival patients are allocated a treatment chair and within 5 minutes treatment begins. Because the unit is small it is also very personal and friendly. There is no additional pressure on the nurses, as there is almost bound to be on a busy oncology ward, and everything seems much more slick and organised.

Most importantly each of my treatment was completed between 3 and 3½ hours and with only 30 minutes travelling time from home, the day out was much shorter and less stressful. I felt very privileged to have access to the MCU for most of my treatment, and very grateful to the Hope for Tomorrow Charity for making this part of my treatment so relaxed and unpressured.

It's now almost a year since I completed my chemo at the MCU and thankfully I'm only seeing my oncologist every 6 months this year. I have been very lucky to have had some of the best treatment possible to deal with my cancer.

Lion John Burrows

Lechlade & District Lions Club