

The 1,338th Meeting of the Brighton and Sussex Medico-Chirurgical Society took place on 1st October 2015 in the Audrey Emerton Building:

The President welcomed the Friends of Brighton and Hove Hospitals who attended the meeting as the guests of Council. She thanked them for all the efforts they put into fundraising for the hospitals.

A number of 6th formers from local schools interested in a career in medicine were also welcomed as guests of the President and President Elect.

Amaran Cumarasamy (student rep on the council) demonstrated the revised website which has been designed by Ihsan Fazal a third year medical student. There is now a link to this on face book.

Dr Barker then introduced the two speakers, Dr Yvonne Gilleece, Joint Principal Lead Consultant for HIV and GU Medicine and Dr Daniel Richardson, Consultant and Honorary Senior Lecturer in Sexual Health and HIV Medicine. The title of their talk was:

“HIV 1981-2015”

Dr Barker paid tribute to the late Dr Brian MacDougall who was one of the first physicians in Brighton to care for patients with AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) the result of infection with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus).

Dr Gilleece and Dr Richardson, using multiple video clips and film excerpts, documented the trajectory of the epidemic from the onset in the mid 1970s to the present time. Early cases were recognised as a distinct entity in 1981 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in men from the gay community in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Patients presented with opportunistic infections such as pneumocystis pneumonia, toxoplasmosis and cytomegalovirus. They also developed Kaposi's sarcoma a previously rarely encountered skin tumour.

Subsequently the illness was noted in the heterosexual Haitian population, in IV drug users and haemophiliacs who acquired the virus through contaminated blood transfusions. The AIDS epidemic remains a major issue throughout Africa in particular. In the early years there was no effective treatment and the disease almost inevitably was fatal.

The importance of the CD4 Tell count and the viral load as markers of disease severity were mentioned.

Initial therapy with drugs such as AZT (Zidovudine) was of limited value and difficult to access.

Triple therapy with HAART (Highly Active Antiretroviral therapy) first introduced to the medical community at the 1996 Vancouver World Congress on AIDS has revolutionised treatment. Life expectancy among Aids sufferers on treatment is now near that of the general population.

The importance of preventing infection by adopting safe sex practices was touched upon as was the prevention of vertical transmission from mother to child.

The ongoing issues of ensuring adequate diagnosis and treatment in low income countries particularly in Africa were also addressed.

Finally Yvonne and Daniel paid tribute to Dr Martin Fisher who died earlier this year. He was instrumental in setting up the HIV service in Brighton after his appointment in 1995 and his efforts created a team with both a national and international reputation..

