

Bladder Health UK

BY SUZANNE EVANS



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Bladder Health UK is a national patient support charity that has been communicating with bladder illness sufferers for 30 years. The charity offers a lot of resources to give help, educate and inform, including webinars, study days, a member magazine, Can't Wait Cards, diet books and patient-focused handbooks on bladder conditions. On our advice line callers are listened to with empathy and understanding by experienced people, with both expert patients and clinical staff available five days a week. Sometimes it will be the first time the caller has admitted to having a continence problem or it may be a regular caller who wants to unburden themselves when they get stressed out by their bladder problems. Whatever the reason for the call the team will always spend as much time as it takes to help.

"If it wasn't for Bladder Health UK goodness knows where I would be now. I will be forever grateful to their staff who spent time talking to me and explaining about the help available."

"The helpline is priceless – advice is practical, realistic and evidence based. I rang the helpline in desperation because my GP didn't believe I was having a UTI up to twice a month. To have someone answer saying "I understand, have you tried this.... It should help because..."

The rise in popularity and availability of social media channels has given BHUK an additional way to reach out and we are proactive on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram. We have over 15,000 members and followers, and this number grows every day. The BHUK website www.bladderhealthuk.org is also a useful source of relevant information.

Admitting to a bladder problem is hard and even if you do summon up the courage to see a GP, diagnosis can be slow and disheartening. Marketing and Communications Manager Susannah Fraser has suffered with bladder issues for 20 years and the reason she is now a passionate advocate and valued team member of the charity is because it helped her at a time when there was no-one else who understood. Susannah comments, "You cannot underestimate the relief I felt when I found this organisation that knew exactly what I was going through and that there were others like me."

The charity has a wonderful community of people whose passion is to make things better for those who know what it is like to live with a debilitating and often isolating illness. We not only deal with sufferers regularly but also have strong supportive relationships in place with healthcare professionals, relevant corporate and commercial organisations and access to both NHS and Government bodies.

We recognise the power of the patient voice and the impact of a 'lived experience', and we are trusted to speak out on behalf of those who cannot be heard on their own. Members of the team are respected stakeholders on relevant National Institute for Health &



Care Excellence (NICE) committees, patient and public involvement (PPI) members on National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) bids and have contributed to reports, surveys and media articles to help raise awareness of the impact having a continence problem has on the individual as well as the wider economy.

In 2022 we held our first full day conference for healthcare practitioners and the feedback was so good that we are holding another one in 2024 (see information below). We will strive to find ways of informing and educating to improve the quality of life of those patients whose lives could be made so much better with understanding and support.

AUTHOR



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SAVE THE DATE

Bladder Health New Horizons Conference for Healthcare Professionals 2024

20 February 2024, The National Conference Centre, Birmingham

<https://register.enthuse.com/ps/event/NewHorizonsinBladderHealth>