Dear colleague,

Welcome to the latest edition of ‘tackle talk’, a briefing designed to keep support groups in our Federation up to date with national developments and plans.

I firmly believe our small charity continues to punch above its weight. We are not big in size, number of resources or overheads, but we can be proud of our achievements in impact, reach and recognition. When I say recognition, I don’t mean in terms of needing to massage our ego but witnessing more people wanting to know more about prostate cancer, asking who they can speak to and how we can help.

Much of this success is due to our 90 or so grass root support groups continuing their good work locally, raising funds, raising awareness and offering a listening ear to newly diagnosed men and their families. I am still amazed at the dedication and commitment of so many of our members, all of whom are volunteers. This is brought home to me while visiting and speaking at over half the groups in my first three years as Chairman and I look forward to continuing this in my second three-year term.

I must also pay tribute to our Trustees, all of whom provide their time on a voluntary basis and help provide guidance and direction as we strive to do as much as we can. Since my last ‘tackle talk’ it is with great sadness to record the passing of Hugh Gunn, one of our longest standing Trustees, who valiantly fought and campaigned till the end for a cause he was totally committed to. Rest in peace Hugh.

Our finances are sound for the moment. At our latest Board meeting we reviewed and updated our current strategy and 3-year plan to continue a focus on the core activities of supporting patients, raising awareness and campaigning for better treatment. Our “Cycle to the Moon” initiative will remain open for 2018-19 as a means of fund raising. My thanks to those support groups who have participated to date. We believe this offers a good way of attracting sponsorship and linking with the sporting and corporate communities. We also agreed to devote more time and resource to fund raising, in order to secure our future and to supplement the donations we receive from pharmaceutical companies.

In this report I would like to focus on three developments: Our relationship with SAGA plc, recent progress with the Tackle Man Van and our latest initiative on psychological health.

**SAGA plc**

I am delighted to report we have been selected as one of SAGA’s two main charities, the other being Silverline. The relationship with SAGA developed from John and Margaret Coleman from our Droylsden group who met Captain Julian Burgess, Master of MS Saga Sapphire while on a cruise (see picture). Captain Julian has since taken our charity to heart, has become an Ambassador for Tackle and has already raised over £10,000 from activities and donations on board his ship. This is a relationship we will be investing time and effort in as we see that SAGA and Silverline are closely aligned with our aims and aspirations. I hope to report more on this as we develop our relationship going forward. We are also promoting Silverline on our web site. Silverline is the only free,
confidential 24 hour helpline for vulnerable and lonely older people in the UK. Please take the time to visit their website https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/what-we-do/.

Tackle Man Van (TMV)
As you know, we have been in discussions with Professor Nick James and his team at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham about setting up a Tackle Bus/Truck/Man-Van. He recently asked ourselves and UNITE Trade Union as TMV partners to attend a briefing. Things have changed somewhat since we first discussed the idea but I believe changed in a very positive way. In summary he has secured, through the QEHB charity, the cost of a self-contained van (essentially a sort of RV which allows anyone with a full licence to drive it) plus the cost of conversion. He has also secured, through a local charitable trust, sufficient funds for running the van for 3 years. This is really good news. The application for funds mentioned partnership with Tackle and UNITE.

The difference from previous thinking is that this will essentially be a “Man Van” for men’s health and wellbeing and it will be a research-based initiative. This last point is particularly important as it will help smooth agreement of ethical and data collection issues. This will provide a valuable database of men’s DNA not just for prostate cancer but general health issues. TMV will initially be piloted for QEHB staff and Birmingham City Council to prove the feasibility and logistics. Once proven, it is the intention Tackle will be able to use the van in conjunction with our local support groups for PSA testing, just as UNITE will do for workplace health checks. All test results could be added to the research database.

A project manager has been appointed - Mehreen Mahmood, a clinical trials nurse at QEHB. A steering committee will be established to include Nick James, the head of the QEHB charity, Lesley Hoo from UNITE and myself. Nick sees the need for a Clinical Advisory Board for the project and I will be proposing Professor Frank Chinegwundoh MBE, head of our Clinical Advisory Board, as part of the team. I am pleased to report that the Tackle Board have agreed to purchase two I-Chroma point of testing PSA kits for the TMV as a gesture of goodwill and to show our commitment to the project.

Prostate Cancer and Psychological Health
Those of you who have heard me speak will know I firmly believe the emotional and psychological aspects of prostate cancer can sometimes be more debilitating than the physical manifestations of the disease. Lots of big words here, but simply put, some men are not very good at discussing what’s going on in their head! I think we need to know more about this topic and see if we can help improve support for men and their families who might be suffering. To this end we have embarked on a Freedom of Information request to all NHS Trusts in England and Wales to understand more about the current level of psychological support for prostate cancer patients, including signposting and follow-up. We are embarking on this study with the help of Wicked Minds www.wickedminds.co.uk and in collaboration with the Red Sock campaign led by Keith Cass MBE in Wales www.theredsock.co.uk

Hopefully the results of this study will help inform where support is good and where more needs to be done. Watch this space!

Best wishes for now,

Roger Wotton
Chairman, Tackle Prostate Cancer