

## **Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on chronic pain.**

### **MEETING AND AGM, October 9, 2019, chaired by Rona Mackay MSP**

Again, the health secretary cancelled five days before this meeting, on a date she had chosen. This was the second time this year and there was patient anger. People in severe pain had travelled far to hear the health secretary. There were Mesh survivors from Glasgow and Fife to Argyll. The patient founder of the Affa Sair Charity travelled from Moray. Two UK charity heads had come from Norfolk and London to Edinburgh, all at own expense.

Public health minister Joe Fitzpatrick deputised. The parliament was sitting very late, patients had to wait over two hours before MSPs were free. But four – Rona Mackay, Monica Lennon, Jackson Carlaw Tom Mason - attended plus Joe Fitzpatrick.

**Re-elected** The AGM endorsed the following MSPs being elected co-conveners – Elaine Smith, Miles Briggs, Rona Mackay, Monica Lennon, Anas Sarwar. Dorothy-Grace Elder was re-elected voluntary secretary.

The minutes of April 24 and of our previous AGM on October 31 2018 were approved.

**Meeting** Patients protested to the minister about the health secretary failing to appear. Scottish Mesh Survivors had made considerable and painful efforts to attend once again and decried being let down for the second time. There was anger that it still hadn't been arranged to bring the American Mesh expert Dr Veronikis to Scotland.

### **Over 40,000 “hidden patients”**

The meeting protested that officials and the Govt's National Advisory Committee on chronic pain had agreed to prioritise primary care, not waiting times at pain clinics, although the Govt had offered money to cut waiting times. Officials had claimed that the number of patients attending CP clinics was “small”. In comparison with those who went to pharmacies and GPs.

But the CPG secretary revealed Freedom of

Information statements by boards which showed the following:

\*Officials had omitted to count over 40,000 return patient visits to clinics. Therefore, how could that decision to downplay clinics be correct? They ignored 40,000 return patients, who add to the

20,000 new patients annually. A total of over 60,000 patients should not be called a “small

number” to be ignored. The figures were obtained under FOI legislation – 13 boards sent statistics - , only NHS Fife didn't supply.

For years, the public had been told that officials couldn't produce return patient numbers – or staffing numbers at clinics. The secretary obtained both under FOI legislation.

\*FOI also confirmed a history of lack of aid for clinics – one pain service hadn't had a budget increase in 9.5 years, since it started. Another received no budget increase for six years, etc all happening as patient numbers rose.

\*FOI disclosed that few health boards had given chronic pain clinics any share of the SG millions available to cut waiting times despite the long waits caused by short staffing.

There was detailed discussion and upset that the Government's Advisory Committee and the

Clinical Priorities Unit had shown no action. The meeting agreed that, apart from their vote of no confidence on April 24 in the National Advisory Committee on Chronic Pain and the Clinical Priorities Unit, this was now reinforced and they wanted no involvement of these agencies in the Access Collaborative plans.

Patients urgently wanted an end to return patients having no limit to the time they wait - people became return patients after the first visit. As some reported they could wait a year to 18 months between treatments needed six monthly, patients requested the time limit given by a clinician should be made official. Chris Bridgeford of the patient led charity "Affa Sair", which has over 500 members, presented his exchange of letters with the minister about NHS Grampian having some of Scotland's worst waiting times for years. NHS Grampian had not confirmed receiving the money mentioned. <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1CGF52CVvotZzU01NEiR8VkYYldc8z2fc>

The Minister promised to study what he had been informed and see what could be done. He talked to the MSPs after the meeting, which did not finish until 10.25 pm. The chair thanked all, especially patients, for enduring sitting for so long and travelling large distances.

Later, the Group was informed that the health secretary would meet the conveners after the October 2019 recess. This has not happened to date in 2020.

**ATTENDANCE:** Five MSPs, 41 non MSPs.

MSPS: Rona Mackay, chairing, Joe Fitzpatrick, minister for Public Health, Monica Lennon, Scottish Labour health spokeswoman, Jackson Carlaw, leader, Scottish Conservatives, Tom Mason  
Five

**NON MSPs**

Dr Iain McPhee University of the West of Scotland, DG Elder, vol. secretary Liz Barrie, Rob McDowall, Equality Council, David Caulfield, Welfare Scotland, Fiona Robinson, Chris Bridgeford, Affa Sair, Mark McLeod, Affa Sair, Ian Semmons, chair, Action on Pain, Marilyn Weir, Mesh patients, Nancy Honeyball, Marion Scott, Elaine Holmes, Olive McIlroy, Sharon Mercado, Marion Garland, Gillian Watt, Marion Kenny, Lisa Megginson, Cliff Megginson, Chris Costello, Professor Colin Howie, Martha Haney, Linda Mawson, Laura Clark, Volunteer, Versus Arthritis, Judith Semmons, Specialist Physio, pain, Sarah Randell, Teapoot Trust, Corinne Greasley-Adams, People Direct, CIC,

Dr Jacqueline Mardon, Centre for Integrative Care, Amber Hagelstein, Health & Social Care Alliance Scotland, James O'Malley & Alan McGinley, Versus Arthritis, Richard Gardner, Pfizer, Gordon Barrie, Alan Robinson, George Welsh, Arlene Byrne & Geraldine McGuigan, Lanarkshire Lignocaine group, Heather Baxter, Lilly, Anita Stewart, Clinical Priorities, Scottish Govt, Gordon Frame, Director for Scheduled Care, Scottish Govt, Carolyn Chalmers, SG Modernising Patient Pathways Programme,

40. Total 46