

Men face cancer risk

THOUSANDS of men will continue to be unaware of their risk of prostate cancer unless they get to know their bodies better, a new report will warn tomorrow.

A poll commissioned by The Prostate Cancer Charity found that only one in 10 adults knew what the prostate gland does and the role it plays in a man's sexual function.

And less than half the men quizzed knew where it was located in the body.

Charity chief executive John Neate said: "The prostate gland is the most likely part of the male body to become cancerous. One in 11 UK men is at risk of prostate cancer."

Many Brits can't read

PLANS to improve the skills of adults will be unveiled by the Government this week amid growing concerns from employers that they cannot recruit properly qualified staff.

Ministers will admit that too many adults lack basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

A White Paper to be published on Tuesday will offer new learning opportunities to adults and encourage stronger links between employers to tackle training problems.

CRAZY

HELMOND, Netherlands: A cafeteria owner fought off a gun-wielding raider - with chips. She hurled piping hot french fries at the armed robber. The fries, a national snack in Holland and Belgium where they are deep-fried in oil, salted and eaten with mayonnaise and chopped onions, saved the day.

WORLD

Sex exams for kids call

CHILDREN in the UK should have to take exams in sex and relationships, MPs said today.

Members of the cross-party Commons Health Select Committee want both subjects to be a statutory part of the National Curriculum, with regular assessments to check pupils' progress.

Classes would be taught by specialist sex and relationship teachers rather than form tutors, they said.

Two jailed in croc horror

TWO teenage farm hands have been jailed for life after murdering two prostitutes by throwing them bound and weighted into a crocodile-infested river in Australia.

The bodies of Phuang Sri Krokamrang, 58, and Somjai Insamnan, 27, were found floating in the Adelaide River in March last year by the crew of a crocodile-spotting tourist boat.

A jury took 12 hours to find Ben William McLean and Phu Ngoc Trinh, both 19 year-old farm labourers, guilty.

WOMAN SAYS BLUNDERS



CAMPAIGN: Sue George hugs her mum Beryl Walters

EXCLUSIVE

BY TOM WELLS

A TOP Midland surgeon is at the centre of a police probe looking into the death of one his patients.

Andrew William Hall, a highly-paid consultant employed by several hospitals, is being investigated after a woman claimed that his medical blunders killed her elderly mother.

Detectives have passed a file to the Crown Prosecution Service, who will now decide whether to take the case further.

If they choose to go ahead, Mr Hall - who has more than 30 years' experience - could ultimately face manslaughter charges.

The medic - a top-ranking member of the Territorial Army who served in Iraq - was recently blasted in an NHS Ombudsman's report into his competence.

He was heavily criticised for failing to diagnose life-threatening symptoms displayed by elderly mum Beryl Walters nearly three weeks before she died.

The General Medical Council (GMC) has also now re-opened its investigation into Mr Hall.

The probe will look into the cases of four Midland patients who died after operations carried out by the surgeon.

The GMC investigation will analyse the circumstances of Beryl Walters' death, after a relentless campaign by her daughter Sue George.

She has also reported Mr Hall to the police.

On Friday, outside his home in the posh Leicester suburb of Stoneygate, the surgeon told us: "I have nothing to say on this at all, thank you."

Beryl, 68, was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus, the tube which connects the mouth and the stomach, in 1998.

The pensioner was a well-known local figure. She and husband, James, had been married for more than 40 years and enjoyed ballroom dancing together.

"Mum was partially-sighted, but she was a fighter - she refused to even carry her white stick," said Sue, a teacher from Quorn, near Loughborough in Leicestershire.

"She swam, she walked, she had lots of friends and was very outgoing. But then we found out she had cancer and our world changed forever."

The family first met Mr Hall, who is in his 50s, during an appointment at Leicester's Glenfield Hospital.

The surgeon had extensive experience, having qualified from Liverpool University in 1968.

Specialising in oesophageal



WAR DOCTOR: Andrew William Hall is a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Territorial Army



HAPPY MEMORIES: James and Beryl Walters on their wedding day and Sue George



surgery, he practised at a range of other Leicestershire hospitals, including Leicester Royal Infirmary, Ashby-de-la-Zouch District Hospital, Coalville Community Hospital and Leicester's private BUPA and Nuffield hospitals.

He also taught courses at London's esteemed Royal College of Surgeons.

Among Mr Hall's impressive credentials was his post as a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Territorial Army - a rank which would later see him treat casualties near Basra during the Iraq war.

So when the surgeon told the family that Beryl's cancer was

curable, they took him at his word. "Mr Hall was very comforting," Sue added. "He described the surgery mum would go through. We felt that she had a good chance of coming through it all."

Beryl went in for surgery in June 1998. The type of operation she would undergo - an oesophagectomy - would last 12 hours, but was a well-known, often-practised surgical procedure.

On the night before the operation, however, the family was approached by Mr Hall for a routine chat to calm their nerves.

It was then that the surgeon announced he wanted to use a

different surgical technique on Beryl.

What he did not tell them was that he had never tried that variation of the operation, called a laparoscopy, before.

Sue, 52, said: "Mr Hall outlined what he wanted to do in just five minutes. He told us he would use keyhole surgery, which would reduce the operation to just five or six hours in total.

"Of course we were delighted. It would be less invasive and mum would be back up on her feet more quickly than expected."

Complications

The next morning, Beryl went in for her operation. But as time passed, Sue began to pace the corridors with worry.

"At 9pm, almost 12 hours after mum went into the operating theatre, there was still no word," she said.

"Then a junior doctor came to see us. He said there had been complications, that mum's trachea, or windpipe, had been torn during the operation.

"We were surprised that Mr Hall was not there to tell us this. But his junior said he was 'too tired' to see us at that stage."

Beryl's trachea was repaired by another surgeon and she was

moved to intensive care. But her problems were far from over.

After a brief improvement, Beryl's condition worsened. An expected stay of just three days in intensive care turned into weeks.

Her lung collapsed and had to be re-inflated. Nurses were forced to sedate her constantly just to stifle the pain.

"I must have walked dozens of miles back and forth along those hospital corridors," Sue said. "By now, my whole life was consumed by Glenfield. I ate there and slept on a sofa in a room next door to mum.

"It had a window looking into intensive care, so at least I felt like I could be near her, even if I wasn't allowed into the unit itself."

More than three weeks passed before doctors became concerned by Beryl's lack of movement. An MRI scan dealt a devastating blow - an undetected spinal haemorrhage had left the pensioner quadriplegic.

Beryl had also developed problems with her breathing and had a swollen stomach, but Mr Hall failed to diagnose the cause.

Had he done so, he would have found a fistula, or tear, between the oesophagus and the stomach lining.

Amazingly, the surgeon did not detect the problem until 19 days later.

SURGEON FACES POLICE PROBE AFTER PATIENT DEATHS

