

HEART THROBS



CARDIAC SUPPORT GROUP
CARING FOR YOUR HEART

The ECHO

Heart Throbs Newsletter Jan 2026

(w) <https://heart-throbs.org> (e) hello@heart-throbs.org

(helpline) 07951 740034

JOHN'S UPDATE

Happy New Year

Happy New Year to all our members, supporters and friends. The New Year finds Heart Throbs in rude health with the number of subscribing members having risen by 17 to 103 over the last 12-months. This 20% increase has pushed us past our financial break-even position. This, in-turn, has meant we can now give a pay rise to our excellent team of exercise trainers as well as absorb the inevitable cost increases in hall hire without having to put up our membership fees. We must all give ourselves a mutual 'pat on the back' for achieving this; our trainers for their excellent tutoring; the cardiac rehabilitation teams at Barnet Hospital and NNUH for introducing most of our new members but also to our membership for creating the friendly, happy and harmonious environment in which we exercise and socialise. Well done everyone.

Jim Yates

Those of you who attended our excellent Christmas Lunch at Enfield Golf Club know that this was the

last event that Jim will be hosting. As Events Manager, Jim has put a lot of work into making our events a great and profitable success over the past few years and we pass on our gratitude for this. In turn, it means we are looking for a new Events Manager so if you feel you can lead and/or contribute to the running of events for Heart Throbs please speak to me, Jim or any other committee member.

New Members

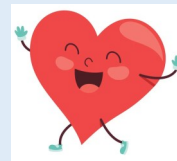
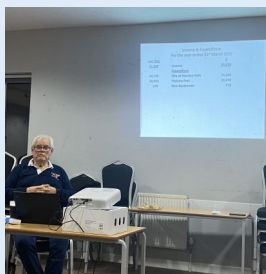
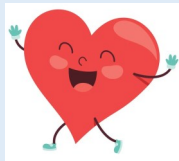
We welcome eight new members since our last Newsletter. In addition, we welcome back our General Secretary, Stefano Francioso, 'Exerciser of the Year 2023' who has made a 'Lazarus' style return to exercise after almost two years of inactivity whilst studying for 'the Knowledge'.

John Golby



Annual General Meeting

On 6th November we held our Annual General Meeting, the first one since Covid that has been held face to face. 20 people attended and there was a delicious buffet of sandwiches, wraps, cheese and biscuits, grapes, crisps, pastries and cookies. John welcomed everyone to the meeting and began by explaining that we currently have 103 members which is a significant increase. John provided a comprehensive run through of the accounts highlighting some key figures. The income from exercise groups was £35,028, social events £3,567, donations £680 and merchandise £153. The expenditure included trainer fees £22,570, hire of halls £12,204, new equipment £715, computer and software £408, website £570 and Zoom subscription £258. At the end there was a question and answer session followed by the raffle.



Catherine McCarthy

Health Matters with Barbara - Martin Pepper

What is your heart condition?

Coronary heart disease.*

What event happened to you and what operation or procedure did you have?

Heart attack in June 2000, followed 10 days later by a quad by-pass*.
No subsequent attacks!

How are you currently? What medication are you taking? Do you have any follow up appointments?

No significant problems, but arrhythmias have been detected in recent years. As a result, I have a pacemaker which is checked every 6 -12 months. I'm taking statins and anti-coagulant medication.

How long have you been attending Heart Throbs?

25 years, membership number 225 (I still have my membership card!). I was introduced to Heart Throbs during the second phase of rehabilitation at Chase Farm.

Which classes do you attend and how have the classes and trainers helped you?

The first classes I attended were Rob Bird's at David Lloyd on a Friday afternoon as I worked a 4½ day week. After I retired, I have been to classes on different days with several trainers. During Covid and subsequently, I've "attended" the Thursday Zoom class with Daria. Domestically, this is very helpful as my wife attends Pilates class at the same time.

What do you like about Heart Throbs?

The exercise classes are structured to encourage fitness improvement for us to be "wellderly" (look it up on Google), I also welcome newcomers who, like me when I joined, are feeling fragile.

A little bit about yourself

I was born in a stately home, Brocket Hall, near Welwyn Garden City as, during the Second World War, the government had requisitioned country houses. This was used as a maternity hospital until 1949. A bit of trivia – there are 8338 Brocket Babies and their website is <https://www.brocketbabies.org.uk/>.

I lived in Chingford until I married, and we have a house in Southgate. I have 2 married daughters and 4 grandchildren. This takes up a lot of time in the afternoons after school. I qualified as a Chartered Electrical Engineer and worked at Thorn, Enfield, on stage lighting equipment. I then moved to Marconi on military equipment.

I enjoy DIY and, since retiring, I have time to learn about cooking and baking (more than just jacket potatoes and baked beans!). Another bit of trivia – Harry Kane and Leslie Phillips went to my junior school and Harry and David Beckham went to my secondary school (it was a rugby union school when I was there!). Finally, I'd like to thank everyone in Heart Throbs, trainers, committee and members for giving me the challenge and encouragement to improve my level of fitness.

*Coronary heart disease (CHD) is when your coronary arteries become narrowed by fatty material within their walls. These arteries supply your heart with blood containing high levels of oxygen. Over time, a fatty material called atheroma (sometimes known as plaque) can build up inside your coronary arteries. This process is called atherosclerosis. Eventually, your arteries may become so narrow that they cannot get enough blood to your heart (British Heart Foundation, (1 January 2024). *Most people need treatment for 3 arteries (called a triple bypass) or 4 arteries (a quadruple bypass). Some people only need treatment for 1 or 2 arteries (a single or double bypass). (NHS website December 2025)



Barbara Miller

Meet the Committee - Jim Yates/Events Manager

1) When did you join Heart Throbs?

I originally joined the exercise classes at Heart Throbs in 2012, after suffering a heart attack (myocardial infarction) and completing the hospital rehabilitation programme. After two catheter ablations in 2012 and 2014, I was able to return to work and then just attended occasional social evenings. In September 2018, I was diagnosed with a superbug infection on our return from holiday in Mexico and required emergency open-heart surgery, involving a replacement metal Aortic valve and a bovine patch. After several months of further rehab, I rejoined HT and became much more involved in attending regular exercise classes and social events.



2) What do you enjoy about Heart Throbs?

I volunteered to help with starting up The Zoom exercise classes in Lockdown and also, help to set up our WhatsApp platform to keep members informed and able to communicate better, during those challenging times. I then became involved with organising and hosting many of our social events after the covid restrictions were lifted. We have tried to provide a variety of guest speakers each year, including some of our own members and have been able to raise funds from entry fees/raffles/quiz nights /donations to help ensure that our Incomings exceed our Outgoings each year... so, a big thanks to all !

3) When did you take on the role?

The role evolved from 2021 onwards.

4) What do you enjoy about your role on the committee?

I have always felt very fortunate to have had access to the Heart Throbs support network and activities to aid my recovery and have been only too pleased to give something back to such a wonderful group. There is a very special and unique atmosphere within our membership.

5) What football team do you support?

I support Manchester City and have done since attending my first football match at Maine Road in 1956. There were some very tough years following City from 1956-2012, believe me!

6) What's your favourite food?

Some of you may know that I am an extremely fussy eater, having several allergies, intolerances and many dislikes!! So, plain food: Steak and frites/ Fish and Chips.

7) What's your favourite drink?

Campari and Soda if the weather is hot. I am also partial to a glass or two of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, Malbec or Champagne.

8) What's your favourite holiday destination?

Alison and I have had many fabulous times in the Caribbean, especially Jamaica, where we have met and spent time with some lovely people, including Mr. Motivator.

9) Do you have a pet, if so what?

We have always had room in our house for rescue cats. One cat, Felix lived with us until the age of 23. Two years ago, our aged tortoiseshell cat passed away. Within a couple of days, a stray lookalike cat appeared in our garden and after a few weeks of discussions, her owner chose to give the cat to us. So, we were adopted by Izzy.

Heart Throbs Social Events

Our Autumn/Winter 2025 programme included:

- 2 October** Paul Davies, former ITN news man - “The Life and Trials of a Television News Man” part 2
- 6 November** - Annual General Meeting
- 11 November** - Our patron Dr Simon Kennon
- 4 December** - Christmas quiz “Around the world in 80 questions”
- 18 December** - Christmas lunch

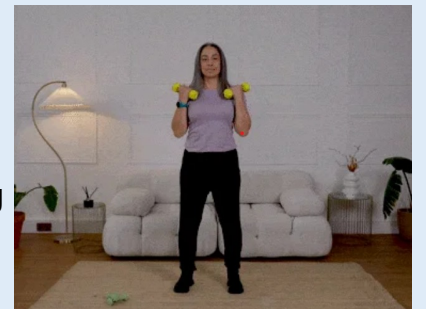
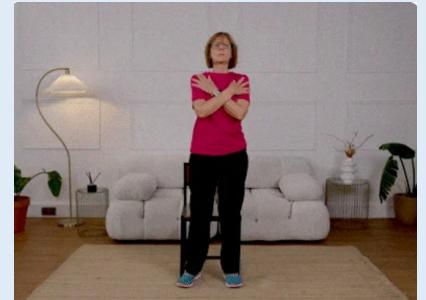
Our 2026 programme:

- 2 April** - Beverley’s Spring Quiz ‘Through the Keyhole’
- 4 June** - Catherine’s Heart Throbs entertains
- 2 July** - Stefano’s BBQ
- November** - Dr Simon Kennon, cardiologist, our patron
- 3 December** - Beverley’s Christmas Jumper Quiz

Best compound exercises to help you lose weight

Staying active comes with plenty of benefits for your heart – including helping to manage your weight. If you’re living with excess weight or obesity, losing weight can reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. And certain exercises can be particularly effective for weight loss when combined with a healthy diet. To lose weight, you need to burn more energy (calories) than you consume. You can do this by eating a healthy diet that’s low in calories and doing more exercise. The recommended daily calorie intake is 2,000kcal for women and 2,500kcal for men. If you want to lose weight, reducing your daily calorie intake by about 600 calories can help you do so safely.

Exercising can also help you burn more energy, but it would take most people several hours of walking to burn an extra 600 calories every day. That’s why combining a balanced, diet with regular physical activity is the most effective approach for sustainable weight loss. But, as well as using up calories, staying active also helps you maintain and build muscle, which can boost your metabolism – or how many calories you burn every day.



Hara Markos, one of our trainers, is a Cardiac Rehabilitation Exercise Physiologist and helps people recover from heart conditions or surgery through exercise. On the British Heart Foundation website Hara shares a series of Compound exercises help with weight loss. A compound exercise is a movement that uses lots of different muscles and joints at the same time, such as squats and press ups. They use up more energy than exercises that only target a single muscle group, like bicep curls or calf raises. If you’re trying to lose weight, compound exercises can be an efficient way to burn calories and build muscle at the same time. They’re also more similar to the movements you make in your daily life. This means they can help to prevent injuries and make everyday activities feel easier. Speak to your doctor before starting any new exercise if you have a heart or circulatory condition, diabetes or high blood pressure.

Source: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine>

Catherine McCarthy

New members

A warm welcome to all our new members; Richard Bacon, Peter Broadbent, Martin Cable, Andrew Dewhirst, Valerie Fiffee, Claire Keene, Avril Perron and Alison Yates.

Catherine McCarthy

Christmas comes to classes

In December Christmas came to our classes with many wearing Christmas t-shirts, tops and hats with many positive comments about Mark's transformation. We had a Christmas tree in the corner and exercised to Christmas themed songs. In Mark's classes we had the a competition to bounce the ball into the bin and a reflex reaction catching sticks game. Tim was the worthy winner of the mince pies as he managed to throw the ball in the bin and catch all six sticks, well done Tim.



Christmas Quiz

On 5th December we held a quiz night with the theme of 'Around the World in 80 questions' which was very well attended. Topics ranged from food and drink, music, history, literature and sport. The quiz was won by 'the team that won last time' who received tubs of Celebrations as their prize. Two teams won the table rounds and they received selection boxes. A huge thank you to Beverley for being the quiz master and to Deborah for keeping score. The Christmas jumper competition was won by Elizabeth for her fun Rudolph number with fairy lights. We also had the grand raffle.



Christmas Lunch

On Thursday 18 December 2025 we held our end of year Christmas Lunch at Enfield Golf Club. It was organised by Corrine and we had a record turnout of 61 members and friends who were able to join us for a delicious lunch and to experience the “Exerciser of The Year “ awards. Jim Yates hosted the event and introduced the nominees for Exerciser of the Year.



“Exerciser of The Year “ - Female

a) **Catherine McCarthy** is a committee member and attends 3 classes a week (4 including Mark’s non Heart Throbs Thursday evening class in Southgate). She helps organise the Monday evening class at St Stephen’s, produces the newsletter, maintains the website and organised the very successful VE Day celebration.

b) **Anne Cullen** is a committee member, deputy events manager, a regular attendee at fitness classes and manages the grand raffle at social events to boost funds.

c) **Trish King** is a regular attendee at our weekly Monday and Wednesday evening fitness classes and social evenings.

d) **Barbara Miller** is a committee member, delivers the Phase 3 Rehab classes and writes the members interviews for the newsletter.

The 2025 Award went to **Barbara Miller!** Barbara received an engraved statuette. She also received a polo shirt with our logo and title.



“Exerciser of The Year “ - Male

a) **Jim McCluskey** is a committee member, delivers the Phase 3 Rehab classes and is a regular attendee at fitness classes.

b) **Tony Hurford** is a star of the Monday morning classes and encourages everyone to bring their own mat.

c) **Jim Yates** is a committee member, events manager and a regular attendee at our weekly fitness classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

d) **Rob Ellis** is a regular attendee at our weekly fitness classes and has been nominated for three consecutive years.

e) **Maurice King** is a regular attendee at our fitness classes and social events. He also has the smallest bypass scars having been one of the first patients in the country to have a bypass by keyhole.

The 2025 Award went to **Maurice King!** Maurice received an engraved statuette. He also received a polo shirt with our logo and title.



Corinne was thanked for organising the lunch and the event ended with a big thank you to John Golby for everything he does to keep Heart Throbs going throughout the year! We now have 103 members so we are going from strength to strength.

Catherine McCarthy

Christmas Lunch - Photo Gallery



ITN Newsman—Paul Davies OBE

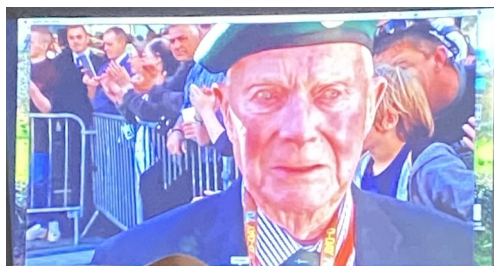
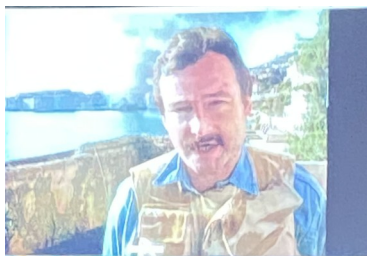
On 2nd October we welcomed the return of Paul Davies OBE the ITN Newsman. Paul has over 50 years experience in journalism including radio and television. Paul shared stories from around the world explaining that to do this job you need to have humanity and like most people.

He talked about the last reunion of D-day veterans at Bayeaux in Normandy, the first French city to be liberated after the Second World War. One veteran said it was the best day of his life. Paul explained that he became a war correspondent not because he was heroic but because he was naïve. He thought it sounded fabulous but the reality was war and revolutions.

He shared a story of a near miss from Chechnya as civilians were leaving. Paul and his cameraman were blown into a ditch with the cameraman initially blown onto the bonnet of their car. He also covered the Hillsborough Inquest where it was shown that the South Yorkshire Police had lied as part of a huge coverup. In reality ambulances were held back and the fans had not been looting. He shared other stories including the return of dead soldiers to Wootton Bassett, Captain Tom's birthday cards, the hunt for 7/7 bombers and the siege of Dubrovnik, for which Paul received the Freedom of the City, the Hatton Garden burglary and the poor treatment of veterans. He explained that the politician Johnny Mercer who was Minister of State for Veteran's Affairs said that Paul had made a huge difference to veterans.

Paul currently teaches new reporters and explained that he has been motivated in his career by the need to be honest and knowing that he can make a difference. A question and answer session followed and when Paul was asked about his best jobs he replied royal tours and test cricket tours.

Paul was thanked for delivering such an interesting talk and we finished with the grand raffle.



Dr Simon Kennon

Preventing Cardiovascular Disease

On Tuesday 11th November at Enfield Gold Club we welcomed our patron, Dr Simon Kennon, Consultant Cardiologist at Barts Heart Centre and Royal Free Hospital. The event was very well attended and we listened as he gave a very informative talk about preventing the development and progression of cardiovascular disease.



Cholesterol

He explained that atherosclerosis is like hardened porridge in the arteries which is cholesterol plaque building up in the artery wall. If there is a rupture of plaque

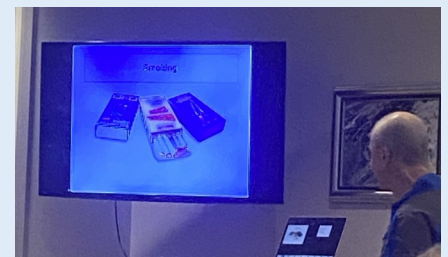


blood can clot on the tear point and cause the artery to block.

Cholesterol can also damage the endothelium lining of the artery allowing cholesterol to invade the arterial wall. As we age the artery walls also become damaged. Total cholesterol is no longer used to assess cholesterol levels, the focus is on LDL. It should normally be less than 3.0 or 1.8 for those who have experienced problems. Statins can help with Rosuvastatin being the strongest. High dose statin therapy has shown a regression in cardiovascular disease.

High Blood Pressure

Smoking should also be avoided and there are nicotine chewing gum and patches available to help those trying to give up. Bupropion can also be used to help give up smoking but there are significant side effects. Simon concluded it was better not to smoke these days but mentioned that when he was a student it was very common and there were sweets in the shape of cigarettes aimed at children. He explained that high blood pressure was also a problem, particularly in women, which is responsible for a lot of cardiovascular disease. Blood pressure is easy to measure. NICE guidelines are 135/85 although Simon recommends 130/80. There is a lot of medication for treating high blood pressure which is very effective resulting in less heart attacks and strokes.



Lifestyle changes

Simon explained that lifestyle changes were also crucial. Obesity is linked to cancer, joint degeneration and diabetes as well as cardiovascular disease. Exercise reduces blood pressure, cholesterol and the incidence of diabetes. Weight loss can be achieved through diet and exercise, which is difficult, through surgery which is invasive and through drugs such as Ozempic which is effective but causes muscle mass reduction. Simon highlighted that drugs companies are good at developing drugs that make them money.

After the talk there was a question and answer session, which we all appreciated, followed by the grand raffle and a thank you presentation to Simon.

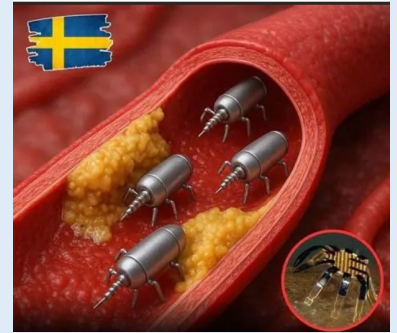


Catherine McCarthy

Nanoparticles Therapy Could Wipe Out Plaque Build-Up in Arteries

Why is Nanoparticle Therapy used?

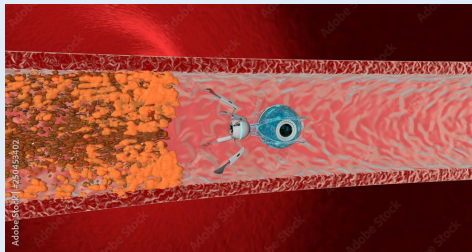
To minimize the risk of cardiovascular disease, our arteries need to be clear and inflammation-free, and scientists have developed a new technique that uses carbon nanoparticles to fight the buildup of dangerous plaques. Plaques congregate inside these blood flow channels from fatty substances like cholesterol, dead and damaged cells, and other deposits, thickening and stiffening the artery walls in a process known as atherosclerosis.



What has the research shown?

Using nanoparticles thinner than human hair, loaded with a drug to activate immune cells, a team led by researchers from Michigan State University and Stanford University was able to confirm their precisely targeted therapy led to substantial plaque reduction in pigs with atherosclerosis. "Using PET [positron-emission tomography] scans, we were able to measure the effects of the therapy on pig arteries" says biomedical engineer Bryan Smith of Michigan State University. "We showed in animal models such as pigs that we can decrease the levels of inflammation in the plaque based not only on this clinically used PET imaging technique, but also by molecular assays."

What is Nanoparticle Therapy?

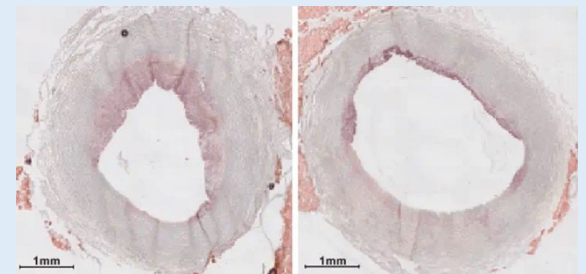


The nanoparticle invasion reactivates a process called efferocytosis, where dead or damaged cells that contribute to the plaques are cleared out from the arteries by the immune system. Over time, for a number of reasons, efferocytosis can be overwhelmed by plaque build-up. The same efferocytosis boost technique has previously been shown to be successful in mice, and there are some promising developments in this latest research.

First, the team scaled up the nanoparticle delivery for pigs showing they could produce enough of these tiny operators to work in humans. Second, the treatment was shown to be targeted enough that there was no noticeable collateral damage inside the arteries. Potentially, this clean-up method can destroy healthy cells, leading to anemia – but there were no signs of that here. "We saw none of the side effects that would have been anticipated had the therapy not been precisely targeted" says Smith. We know that atherosclerosis and the cardiovascular problems that it leads to – including sudden heart attacks – are one of the biggest causes of death in many countries, so there's an urgent need to reduce risk levels.

A role in reducing atherosclerosis

Cleaning out plaque buildup is one of the key ways of doing that. Changes in diet and getting more daily exercise have also been shown to be beneficial when it comes to preventing and slowing down atherosclerosis. We may soon have another option for tackling this major problem.



Next steps

The research team is now investigating ways to prepare these nanoparticle agents for human clinical trials. "These results collectively highlight the feasibility of advancing 'trojan horse' nanoparticles further toward the clinic," write the researchers in their published paper. The research has been published in *Nature Communications*.

Scientists trial patch to mend failing hearts

Could give hope to millions

Damaged hearts could be mended using small "patches" of heart muscle grown in the lab, say scientists writing in *Nature*. The technology could give new hope to millions of people with advanced heart failure whose treatment options are currently limited, the German researchers say. Based on early results of a small trial in humans and promising tests in monkeys, the patches appear to support the pumping of the heart safely. However, the long-term potential of the treatment is as yet unknown, with a clinical trial in 15 patients still ongoing.



The patches are grown from another person's stem cells - special cells which can be turned into any number of different cell types - and made into heart muscle cells. The lab-grown cardiac tissue can then be grafted on to beating hearts to help them repair. It is like "implanting young muscle", says study author Ingo Kutschka, from University Medical Center Goettingen. A small incision is made in the chest and the 3.5in (9cm) by 1.5in patch is stitched on to the surface of the heart. "It's tricky because the tissues are floppy, and you have to take care to make it stay in shape," he says.

New muscle can be added to failing hearts

There have been encouraging results in trials of the patches on primates and on one human patient. The 46-year-old woman had a heart attack in 2016, then developed heart failure which got steadily worse. In 2021, after all possible treatments had been tried, she chose to have a heart patch. The researchers say her condition was stable and she experienced no side effects from the implant, before having a heart transplant three months later. The patch was able to "adapt, grow, mature and start to support the failing heart," says lead author Prof Wolfram-Hubertus Zimmermann. Her case shows that new muscle can be added to failing hearts "without safety concerns, such as tumours and arrhythmia [irregular heart rhythms]", he added. The patches of engineered heart muscle have to survive in the patient and be nurtured over several months, so are not useful for people who need emergency care, the researchers say. In trials on monkeys, the research team found the patches were good at contracting, enhancing and thickening the heart wall, which improved the pumping of the whole heart.



Researchers have more to learn

Heart failure is the leading cause of death worldwide, but there are few effective ways of fixing the organ once it is broken. It is a condition that makes even simple daily tasks, like climbing the stairs or getting dressed, exhausting. Heart devices can be costly and come with complications, and a heart transplant - although the best solution - is rarely an option. Prof Zimmermann says: "99% of patients with heart failure won't receive a new heart." The researchers have more to learn from the current human trial and plan a long-term follow-up of 15 patients to find out more about the health of those living with the patches for years. Prof James Leiper, director of research at the British Heart Foundation charity, said the early results were "promising", but trials in a larger number of patients were needed "to determine the effectiveness of the heart patch in humans". "If these are positive, it could help to usher in a new era of heart failure treatment," he said.

(Source: [Scientists trial implant to patch up the heart - BBC News](#)).

Stefano Francioso

Frozen Strawberries deserve more hype than they get

Most people assume fresh is always better — but freezing actually locks in the vitamins, antioxidants, and natural compounds that make berries so powerful for your health. When strawberries are frozen at peak ripeness, their nutrients stay preserved instead of breaking down over time like they do in the fridge.

And here's the cool part: freezing can even make certain nutrients more bioavailable. That means your body can absorb and use them more efficiently. So whether you're blending them into smoothies, tossing them into oatmeal, or snacking straight from the freezer... you're still getting the same (and sometimes better!) nutritional punch as fresh berries.



Convenient, budget-friendly, long-lasting, and packed with benefits — frozen strawberries are one of the smartest choices you can keep in your kitchen.

Start your day with a refreshing and nutrient-packed strawberry smoothie! Blend together frozen strawberries, yogurt, a splash of almond milk, and a little honey for a creamy, fruity treat.

It's a quick, customizable recipe—feel free to add in some spinach or chia seeds for an extra health boost. This smoothie is perfect for breakfast or a mid-afternoon snack. You can even make it dairy-free if needed!

Stefano Francioso

The Committee

The committee meets each month except August and January. The Annual General Meeting usually takes place during the summer. It hasn't taken place for this year yet, details to follow. The committee members are:

John Golby (Chair/Treasurer), Fintan Gallagher (Deputy Treasurer), Stefano Francioso (General Secretary), Jim Yates (Events Manager), Jim McCluskey (Membership Development & NHS Liaison), David Hollifield, Peter Bevan, Deborah Roberts, Anne Cullen (Deputy Events Manager), Corinne Woods (Joint Membership Secretary), Barbara Miller (Joint Membership Secretary) and Catherine McCarthy (Newsletter/Website Editor).

Newsletter suggestions

If you have any suggestions for newsletter items or want to submit an item please contact Catherine at cmccarthy4@sky.com.

Website improvements

If you have any suggestions for improvements to the website please forward them to Catherine at cmccarthy4@sky.com.

And finally

We are planning a social event on 4th June and hoping that talented members of Heart Throbs will be prepared to showcase their talent whether singing a song, playing an instrument, dancing, reciting poetry, juggling, magic tricks or any other talent. If you're interested in taking part please contact cmccarthy4@sky.com.



Catherine McCarthy