“Laughter, The Best Medicine, comes in liquid form”.

“Doc’s Spoonful of Medicine”

#7. Fletton-folk don’t just say “LUMP it”, when they hear a BUMP in the night.

Everyone worries when they find a lump or a bump that they had not noticed before. Luckily, most lumps and bumps on Fletton-folk are benign, but to be on the safe side, unless you are sure about it (from knowledge or previous experience), please speak to your nice GP, who can tell the grass from the weeds in the human lawn, or at least knows a human gardener who can; your GP might advise a scan. This #7 article is just to help you. By the way, one of my radiology colleagues told me that with an ultrasound scan, they can detect a grain of rice hidden anywhere in a bag of sugar. It is particularly accurate for testicular lumps and swellings. Men, young or old, if the body of your testis is swollen, painful, or feels a bit like a boiled egg, instead of a squash ball, get yourself to a doctor. Small cysts in the warehouse of sperm, called the epididymis, beside the testis body, are quite common, and benign, but should be checked at least on one occasion, by a doctor.

Ladies, if, with the flat of your fingers and palm, you can feel “a marble” in your breast, do likewise. You may need a scan or mammogram (breast x-ray). On the other hand, by feeling the breast with your fingertips, you are often just feeling your ribs and normal, naturally uneven, breast tissue. Good to know HOW to do it Eh? If your partner is going to do the checking, then impart this information, so as not to cause alarm, since he/she may “check them” rather more often than the recommended once a month, after the end of your period. Breast cancer is more common with advancing age, but benign cysts and fibrous lumps are much more common in women, before the menopause.

One of the commonest lumps is the “sebaceous cyst”, a firm lump of congealed human oil (sebum), and sometimes also pheromones, found at the base of hairs, in the hair bearing skin of the scalp, neck, back, armpit, groin, or beard area. Everyone at the office may be trying to work out why they now, find you more attractive, rather than looking at your lump, who knows?! Because they contain a modified oil, they respond well in the early stages to warming, with a hot face cloth, shower, or bath, depending on location; as wax becomes softer and runnier, with heat, thus heat helps in shrinking sebaceous cysts. The NHS has stopped removing them routinely, so you may need to find a friendly, surgically competent, GP, wherever he maybe; rumour has it that he may be spotted sparring with his garden, preparing to defend his belts as the G.O.A.T. in work, life balance!

Another common and benign lump is the “ganglion”, a cystic lump which can be soft or hard, and sometimes painful. Ganglia are found in relation to joints, typically the wrist, fingers, and ankles. They are the lubricating, jelly-like, fluid of joints or tendons, which has leaked out of their normal containing tissues, as a result of wear and tear, not always age-related. Surgical excision is prone to disappointing recurrence, because, when the containing tissue degenerates, repair after evacuation or decompression of the contents, is like trying to stitch together holes in tissue paper.

Lumps in the neck need assessment by a doctor. Thyroid gland swellings called goitres may be benign or malignant. The thyroid gland is midline below the “Adam’s apple”, but thyroid lumps can be slightly off-centre. Enlarged lymph nodes, common when there is an infection in the tonsils or roots of teeth, can be more sinister signs of cancer either primary in lymphoma, or secondary spread from cancer elsewhere. Blow me down, but semen-ly it appears that mouth and throat cancers, mostly smoking-related, are now becoming more common amongst young people (yes, you Girl and you Fella, too), because of “sexual practices”, transmitting HPV (Human Papilloma Virus); just when we are making headway with cancer of the cervix (also caused by HPV), by vaccinating all school children in their early teens. Please don’t ignore lumps during Lockdown, Fletton-folk.