**KSS Air Ambulance**

At the October meeting we were treated to a presentation about the Air Ambulance service by Richard Draycott.

The Air Ambulance serves Kent, Surrey and Sussex, and has been operating for 35 years, flying over 40,000 missions in that time. It is a charity, with 90% of its funds coming from donations, and 10% from NHS, government etc.

The area served by the charity has 4.8 million residents, plus a huge transient population moving through the region, and the service receives 9 calls per day on average. They operate four response vehicles, which attend 25-30% of the missions, and two helicopters. Originally the helicopters flew only during the day, but they now operate 24x7. There are two pilots, and a team of critical care paramedics, doctors and consultants.

The most common injury attended is head injury. Helicopters look for a nearby suitable landing place, such as a sports field. They prefer not to land on roads, but will do so on motorways, because they are fenced, and one carriageway can be closed. The helicopters are also used for transfers between hospitals, and this was especially the case during the COVID pandemic.

The survival rate of patients has increased over the 35 years from 10% to 80%. Defibrillators on board are used to treat cardiac arrest, and doctors sometimes carry out open heart surgery and other major procedures at the roadside. Previously half of the deaths were through blood loss, but recently, a major donation has enabled the helicopters to be equipped with the fridges and warming apparatus to enable them to start carrying blood on board. Paramedics now spend a week of their training with the Air Ambulance.

Future developments include a trial of using drones to deliver defibrillators, and enabling video transmission to hospitals, so that the medical teams have already seen and understood the situation before the patient arrives.

Overall, it costs £51,000 per day to run the service. Volunteers run many fundraising events, as well as a weekly lottery, and this year, there will be carol concerts at Arundel Cathedral and Lancing College. Further information about the Air Ambulance can be found at aakss.org.uk

The evening concluded with light refreshments and a raffle.

Jo Myland