



## Welcome

So many opportunities are presenting themselves at the moment regarding the research and the potential of what we could achieve together with Stitchlinks that my mind appears to be in a permanent state of dilemma. Shall I or shan't I, should we go down this route or that? So if you don't mind I'm going to discuss some of these issues and choices with you this month and I'd value your feedback. The potential is huge, but I want to get it right and to do that I need your feedback, feelings and suggestions. As you'll read, some are ethical dilemmas, others are time related. I've also been busy crocheting bunting for our group's stand at the hospital fête, but I'll tell you more about that next time!

Betsan xxx



## Support

### News

The big news this month is that my last three years of laying the groundwork on the research front is finally paying off. We now have a number of well known names in the fields of depression, pain and quality of life involved in getting together our funding bid, which is really exciting.

Steve and I sat down last week to work through ideas for future Stitchlinks plans. One of the ideas we discussed was to have a Stitchlinks weekend – should it take the format of a luxury pampering break, which would be expensive, or should we look at other ways of doing it? Coincidentally Stitchlinks member Sarah contacted me with an 'idea' for celebrating Stitchlinks next birthday (23rd January 2009). Her idea was to hold a Stitchlinks weekend which would be affordable for everyone. She's investigated youth hostels and it's possible to rent out a whole hostel at a cost which would make the weekend 'doable' for everyone. You can find details of her ideas on the [Forum](#) and we'd love to hear your views. Is it something you'd enjoy? Please let us know and join in the ongoing discussion on the Forum.

New articles have been posted on the website since our last Newsletter. Visit our [News](#) page to find details.

Don't forget to log in regularly to the [website](#) and [Forum](#) to keep up to date!

### My Story

I'm going to hijack the my story section this month to tell you the tale of one of my dilemmas. It's the difficult subject of acrylic versus ethically sourced wool. The word acrylic is often 'unmentionable' in the world of wool, but there I've said it and there's no

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going back! Without doubt, in a perfect world the answer would be ethically sourced yarn, BUT this type of yarn is VERY expensive and going down this route would deprive the knitters on low incomes of the pleasures and health benefits of knitting.

The debate/dilemma has arisen because one of our aims is to introduce knitting into hospitals, care homes and doctors' surgeries. Many of the people are on benefits or very low incomes and would simply be unable to knit if they didn't use acrylic yarns. In addition, acrylic is suitable for those with allergies, can be washed in a machine without running and is hardwearing. Our group at the Pain Clinic in Bath knits for the Special Care Baby unit of the hospital. They require cardigans, hats and booties that can withstand high washing temperatures, are cheap to produce (because they cannot be transferred between babies) and don't contain any dyes or fibres which may irritate prem baby skin.

However, acrylic is a by product of the oil and plastics industry which is linked to a host of detrimental environmental issues. BUT as I understand it, it is a by-product, so would it be thrown as waste if not used to make acrylic?

I will write a longer article on this issue at a later date, but I'd love to hear your views. I know there are lots of interesting alternatives to wool these days, but they're all very expensive.

So how do we give those on low income an opportunity to knit without damaging the environment? It's easy enough to announce that everyone should knit ethically, but in reality is it possible? AND then, of course, there's the subject of needles! Would anyone like to research this topic further for me?

**“Thank you  
again for caring,  
listening to me  
and thinking me  
a wonderful  
person.”**

Stitchlinks member

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### *Did you know*

*An active social life with lots of friends is good for your health.*

*Those who have a network of supportive friends generally have stronger immune systems enabling them to fight off disease more effectively. They also stay more mentally alert and have been shown to live longer than those who are isolated.*

*Technology today makes it easier for everyone to keep in touch, so we can all benefit!*

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## Friendship

### Forum

Our Stitchlinks **Forums** are the place to go for discussions, for seeking help on a project or support from friends who understand. As I mentioned previously there is currently a discussion going on about what you would like from a Stitchlinks weekend. Do you think it's a good idea, or perhaps not? How much could you afford and would you be happy with a weekend at a youth hostel? Why not join in and let Sarah know your views – after all we can't give you what you want unless you tell us!

If you have any strong views about acrylic or ethically sourced yarn please join in the discussion on this. We all know in our hearts that, in the perfect world, we'd all knit with ethically produced yarn, use ethically manufactured needles all packed in ethically selected packaging, but how do you compromise when you're on low income and are a prolific knitter as many are?

We'd like to see your finished projects too, you can do that by uploading a photograph into the Gallery section. You'll find instructions on attaching photographs on the Forum, but if you find this a bit daunting simply email me a photo (or post one) and I'd be happy to put it on for you.

I've heard from a few people recently who have deliberately stayed away from the Forum when they've felt down because they didn't want to upset others. I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know that we want you to use the Forum in these situations. Whereas conversations there are usually upbeat, we're also there to support you in times when you feel really down, feel like a moan or a really good RANT! That's one of the reasons we're there – to support each other at all times. So please don't feel you have to stay away – we all understand as most of us will have been there too! And of course we have our regular coffee mornites. Details of which can be found in the column opposite.

### Groups

The discussions around our Stitchlinks birthday weekend have made me realise just how close knit (forgive the pun!) we've become as a group of friends. At the same time, however, you welcome new members with open, caring arms and that makes us very special!

**“This is the first  
time I've been  
able to  
talk openly  
to anyone.”**

Stitchlinks member

*Join us for coffee!*

July's online coffee mornites will take place on **Saturday 5th July at 10am, UK time** and **Wednesday 16th July at 8pm UK time** on our **Members' Plus Forum**. Coffee mornites are a great way of getting to know new friends on the Forum. If you're new to the Forum you can observe the chatter until you feel confident to join in, but we'd love to see you there. We've kept these group online sessions on the Members Plus Forum so that you can be freer to talk as openly as you wish. Let us know what you think about that decision.

Look forward to chatting to you there!

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Our group at the Pain Management Unit of the Royal United Hospital in Bath has knitted so many baby cardigans, hats, bootees, mittens and gifts that we've decided to start selling them to buy more wool for the group. On Saturday July 28th we had a stand at the hospital fête, so I'll let you know how we got on in my next Newsletter at the end of July. The items also included luxury 100% cotton face towels and soap gift sets, finger puppets and even knitted Liquorice Allsort noughts and crosses sets and scrumptious looking knitted cake pincushions!

## Research

As I mentioned previously the research is at an exciting stage and I'm getting impatient now to get going on the real nitty gritty scientific project. My work so far has been to collect anecdotal evidence in order to prepare the groundwork for this stage of the research. There are some well known experts involved and I'm simply itching to tell you all about them. One thing I can tell you is that one aspect of the project will be to study groups, so I will be looking for volunteers who would be willing to start up groups to coincide with the project. Thank you to those on the Forum who have already offered their help, if there is anyone else who is able to help out, please let me know. Another aspect of the research will be online questionnaires which we will link to via the Stitchlinks website when the system is up and running, so I'll keep you updated on the progress in the Newsletters and on the [News](#) and [Research](#) sections of the website.

There will be other projects and 'experiments' which will tie into the project core and we're currently working on the key aspects of these.

## Your Health Matters

You'll find two new articles on [Your Health Matters](#) this month. The first is an introduction to [Pain – making it easier](#) – it's Part one of a series that is aimed at explaining the complexities of pain in an easy to read, understandable format. Research has found that the more you can 'know' your pain, the better you'll be able to manage it. Another article [Fun versus Chores](#) discusses the importance of prioritising your life to include a bit of fun. I'd value your feedback on all Stitchlinks issues, so please let me know your ideas.

**Please fill in  
our [online  
questionnaire](#).  
You'll find a  
link on every  
page of the  
Stitchlinks  
website!**

## Patterns

If the thought of four needles has put you off knitting socks, we've got just the pattern for you. Charlotte has designed a pattern using just two 3mm needles and 100gms of DK yarn. The pattern is adaptable for sizes from a child's 5-7 right up to an adult size 7-9, too. Click on the [patterns](#) page of our website for instructions.

## The Shop

You may have noticed that our Stitchlinks shop is still out of action!

It was never our aim to try to compete with any of the big knitting or stitching stockists, but rather to offer another service to our members. Please let me know whether you'd like this service to continue and what you'd like to see in a Stitchlinks shop.

## Contact us

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