



HOME CARE PLUS

trusted care at home

Winter Newsletter 2012

Christmas is nearly upon us and the weather is certainly cold enough for winter. Long range forecasts seem to indicate we have a good chance of getting snow this year which while beautiful brings its own problems.

This is a time of year traditionally when families gather although this year because of continuing austerity many of these gatherings will be under a shroud of financial hardship. Hopefully we can always keep in perspective the important things in life such as family, friends and our own health.

Our winter newsletter has ideas for looking after the elderly people in our neighbourhoods this Christmas, thoughts on empowering patients as well some musings from Dr. Michael O'Brien and our words of wisdom.

We wish a Happy Christmas to all our readers and a positive 2013 for all.

Michael Harty
Director



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Ten Ideas for Looking After The Elderly This Christmas

It's easy to forget with your family and friends around you as you open presents and all sit down together to eat your Christmas dinner, that there are people out there who are all alone and won't see another human face all day long. OK, it's true that we should spare time to help people less fortunate than ourselves all year long, but why not make a special effort this Christmas and see if you can carry out even one of the below ideas..

A Little Extra Goes a Long Way

Buy an extra gift suitable for an elderly person and either give it to an elderly neighbour or take it into one of the charities that collect Christmas presents for the vulnerable elderly. Perhaps a tin of special biscuits could be delivered to a local day centre or take a bottle of sherry to a residential home near you.

Oh the Weather Outside is Frightful...

With all this talk of a white Christmas we know it's going to be cold, but when was there ever a warm Noel? Many elderly people are at risk of serious injury just by stepping out of doors and slippery paths often mean a shortcut to hospital. Clear a neighbour's path of snow and ice with a bit of shovelling and salting (it's a great way to keep warm and burn the Christmas calories off). Remember, it doesn't have to be actually snowing for a path to need de-icing.

When Christmas Shopping is Good for the Soul

It's easy enough for most of us to get about; we have cars or can easily get on the bus or train to the shops, but what about that elderly neighbour? Knock on their door and suggest they accompany you shopping, so they can get all the festive bits and bobs they require. Bear in mind they might need a little more help than just a lift to the shops; those bags might be heavy.

Rocking Around the Christmas Tree...

Elderly folk climbing on chairs and fiddling with electrical fairy lights is a recipe for disaster – so go and lend a hand! Putting up decorations is fun and something you can do together... and a little glass of sherry and a mince pie afterwards makes it all worthwhile. Remember to go and take them down again before the 6th of January though.



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Stephens Day..... But Early!

Make a little Christmas box hamper complete with homemade mince pies, piece of Christmas cake or pudding, some nice ham, pickles and crackers....And a cracker. Then take it round to your chosen elderly person. It can be embarrassing giving gifts as you might not be sure what the other person would like, but everyone likes a traditional Christmas delicacy to nibble on.

Christmas Is All About the Kids

Many elderly folk don't see their grandchildren and great grandchildren as often as they would like, some not at all and some don't have any. A card or homemade Christmas decoration made by a neighbour's child would not only brighten their day, but the entire festive season every time they looked at it. Go on, get the glitter out!

Christmas Comes But TWICE a Year!

OK so, you've got your plans with your family for the big day itself, but what about Stephens Day or even Christmas Eve? Invite an elderly person round for an early or belated Christmas dinner or lunch and spread the cheer this festive season... and the good news is you get to celebrate twice!

Christmas Dinner is on its Sleigh

Takes hours doesn't it? All that veg prep and de-frosting the turkey only to be gobbled up in 15 minutes flat, everyone over eats and then sits groaning all the way through what ever programme you are watching. Save yourself some calories and drop a lovely hot dinner into a neighbour. Remember to let them know of your kind offer so they don't go to the trouble themselves.... and let them know it's on its way so they don't worry that you've forgotten them!

Make Sure it is Only Santa that Comes Down the Chimney!

Maybe one of your elderly neighbours is going off to the bosom of their family to enjoy a warm and loving Yuletide. In that case they'll need someone to keep an eye on their house, turn lights on and off and generally check for frozen pipes and the like... It has to be said that this is one of the busiest times of the year for burglars, so lend a hand and help keep out anyone who isn't bearing gifts!

The Real Message of Christmas

Of course, you could go the whole hog (perhaps the whole turkey would be more appropriate?) and invite a lonely elderly person to join you this year and share in your family's special day. Or you could share their day, as there are many elderly charities that could do with some help this time of the year. Now that, is the true message of Christmas.



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Empowering Patients

There is a lot of discussion around how we can improve our health system and ensure that we are delivering the best quality care to as many people as possible. These discussions are even more important in these times of economic hardship.

We would say that the best way to ensure our health system is fit for purpose is to give more power to our patients. Who better to decide on what their care should look and feel like than the patient and their family members? Minister Reilly puts it crudely as letting the money follow the patient.

Within the home care sector the problem of scarce funds is very acute with demand far outstripping supply. Currently in the UK there is an important move towards a personalisation agenda for the health care sector which is changing the way health care is delivered there. What is personalisation?

Personalisation means looking at care and health provision in a completely new way. It means looking at healthcare from the patient's point of view and starting with the fact that everyone is unique and as such each person has different strengths, weaknesses, circumstances, preferences and aspirations.



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With this in mind personalisation is all about putting the patient at the centre of assessing their needs and subsequently at the centre of the decision making about how, when and where they are cared for.

Traditionally our health service has been service lead which can mean that patients don't always receive the care and support they need when and where they want it. They are also somewhat divorced from the shaping and construction of their care and support.

Personalisation is all about giving the power of choice back to the patient regarding their healthcare and lives in general. It means ensuring that information and support is available to enable patients make their own choices well informed decisions about how they want to live their lives.

Personalisation is about

- 1) Tailoring support to the individuals needs
- 2) Ensuring patients have access to information, support and advocacy to help them make good decisions about their healthcare provision
- 3) The importance of early intervention, prevention and re-ablement to ensure patients are supported early on and in a manner that's appropriate to them.

With personalisation people would be given their own budgets to spend as suited their particular needs and preferences. For those people not capable of making those decisions support and advocacy would be available from the state.

Personalisation would also allow people to vote with their feet helping to ensure that providers of healthcare services are competitive and supplying a top quality service.

Carer of the Quarter

Our carer of the quarter is Christinah Akaro from Botswana. Christinah has been working with Home Care Plus for the last two years on a variety of different cases. Christinah has also completed our "Responsible and Safe Medication management" training which has meant she has taken on some of our more complex cases. She has been a carer since 2007 and has built up excellent experience in the area.

Christinah is a very compassionate person who seems to have a permanent smile on her face. She is also very conscientious about her work and this is exemplified by the day she turned up for work even after having been just knocked down by a car!



Christinah is one of those carers that you can send in to any situation and you know she will work out. She is a great addition to the Home care Plus team.

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Notes From A GP



What can I do about it!

So how do you feel about the 2013 budget? Are you like me? I can't figure out what to start complaining about first. Or, do you think "Sure, what can we do about?"

Let me give you a story which I think sums up the attitude of many people. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the notion of a primary care service. This service is supposed to encompass a number of different professions in a primary care team. These professions may include doctors, practice nurses, public health nurses, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, social workers and psychologists. These services are supposed to be available equally to all. I'm sure everybody thinks this is good idea. It is, if it works!

Most recently, I received a letter from the physiotherapy manager stating that due to reduced numbers of staff they would not be able to treat all patients, only those with medical cards, children and those that are terminally ill. When I received this letter, there was no shock or outrage from me as I kind of expect this from HSE. Even when the service is available, I may have to wait 3 weeks to get an appointment.

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A few weeks later, I got a visit from the physiotherapy manager asking me had I received that letter. She apologised for the reduced services but said they initially had 11 physiotherapists on their service but that four had taken early-retirement and were not to be replaced and a further two were on maternity leave, again not to be replaced. So now we had five physiotherapists attempting to provide a service which by right should require 11 physiotherapists. The irony of this is that there is a panel of over 200 physiotherapists just waiting for a job, but the HSE due to budget restraints will not sanction payment for replacements.

The physiotherapy manager asked me, "How many phone calls or letters did I receive in complaints from the local GPs about the reduction in visit to the service?" I replied "None!" And I was right. It seems incredible that we as GPs did not complain, but my explanation to her was that I personally would feel that my complaint would fall on deaf ears and not make a difference.

She was embarrassed by not providing an adequate service and she wanted to take our complaints to her manager and demand extra staff for her service. If she were not able to take these complaints to her manager, her manager could then turn around and say "If no one is complaining, then services are not being missed!"

So what are we as citizens to do about our most recent budget? Have you complained to anyone? I think of all the budget decisions the most miserly one is the €325 cut in the €1700 annual grant for respite care because this is picking purely on those who need it most. There is no excuse for whoever introduced this. I can comprehend a reduction in child benefit as are many people including me who will not be unduly affected by this.

But we can make a difference, this was shown a number of years ago when the elderly staged a protest regarding withdrawal of the over 70s medical cards.

So, find out who your local TDs are and e-mail, write or visit them in their local constituency office and tell them that you think the reduction in the annual grant for respite care is ill-advised and you think poorly of them for allowing this to happen. Remind them that this will be in the forefront of your mind when the next election comes about.

Do it today and make your vote count! After all, they are in power because you elected them to represent you. Are they representing you now?

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Dementia Training

Home Care Plus recently sent 6 of our carers on a dementia course run by St. James Hospital. These courses promote an awareness of dementia by providing education and training to carers. It enables participants to increase knowledge and skills and develop attitudes which enhance their ability to provide the best possible care.

Courses encourage active participation and sharing of experience and challenge popular misconceptions about dementia. They are underpinned by a person centred philosophy that views dementia as a disability.

Carers are encouraged to reflect on their practice and to consider innovative ways of approaching the person with dementia so as to minimize the disability associated with cognitive impairment. The underlying ethos is that much can be done to enhance the quality of life of the person diagnosed with dementia.

Words of Wisdom

Happiness is nothing more than good health and a bad memory.

Albert Schweitzer (1875 - 1965)

How much more grievous are the consequences of anger than the causes of it.

Marcus Aurelius

Death is more universal than life; everyone dies but not everyone lives.

A. Sachs