



HOME CARE PLUS
trusted care at home

Care Times Summer 2012

Summer is upon us and here's to hoping we will get a good run of weather to banish the economic blues we are all enduring!

Home care has been in the news quite a lot recently with various calls on the need to introduce standards and regulation into the sector as well as questions around how the limited funds for older people are being spent.

We will be commenting on these issues as well as indicating 10 tips for healthy ageing. In addition we will have our regular sections on carer of the quarter and Dr. Michael O'Brien's ruminations on life in general.

We hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to any comments positive or negative on its content!

Michael Harty
Director



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Professional Institute of Care Providers (PICP) and Home Care Association (HCA) Merger

Until recently, there have been two umbrella organisations representing private providers in the sector, The Professional Institute of Care Providers (PICP) and the Home Care Association (HCA). Going forward these two organisations have decided to merge in an effort to ensure we have one strong and focussed voice representing the interests of our members and their clients.

As the outgoing Chairperson of the PICP, I have strongly backed the merging of the two organisations, feeling that we had much more in common than differences and that it was better for the sector to speak with one voice especially during this period of huge change for home care in general. Going forward I will be the joint chair of Home and Community Care Ireland (HCCI). In the coming months we hope to highlight the issues we see as important for the home care sector and proactively engage with the Department of Health and the HSE to make sure that home care is at the top of their agendas. Our new website www.hcci.ie will be up and running in the coming weeks.

Medication Training For Carers

In response to requests from some hospitals and local health offices that we work with, our Nurse manager Siobhan O'Connor recently went on a medication management course. This eight day programme, comprising three separate modules was specifically designed to equip selected Nursing Staff to effectively deliver a training programme on the area of basic pharmacology and Safe Medication Management practices to non-nursing personnel.

Some of the course content included

National/international best practice on medication management

- Extensive module on pharmacology
- Drug policy
- 2-day Safe Administration of Medication Training Programme
- Customising the programme
- Clinical Assessment of trainees
- Bringing the course back to the workplace – teaching and assessment methods
- Standardising marking of Safe Administration of Medication examination papers

Siobhan is now approved to deliver a two day training programme and to assess non nursing staff in the safe administration of medication using a standardised framework.

We feel the ability of carers to be involved in medication management in the home setting will be a valuable service for hospitals discharging patients and local health offices.

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Home Care Issues

Recently there has been much comment on various issues facing the industry and none more so than the lack of standards and regulation. Home Care Plus in conjunction with other private providers of home care has been to the forefront of calls to bring regulation into the sector over the past few years. Recently the Law Reform Commission added their voice to need for regulation in the sector.

Unlike with nursing homes where the mere presence of other people ensures there is some level of supervision, 95% of home care is delivered on a one to one basis with a vulnerable person and as such the need for standards and regulation is much higher.

Why can't HIQA's remit be extended to supervise standards in the home care sector as well?

Apart from standards the other issue facing the sector is funding. Here there are two issues. First the need to spend more wisely existing funds in the sector by ensuring transparency and accountability for all funds given out. This includes funds given to charities and the Not For Profit sector. Organisations must show what services they are providing for any funds received in a clear and unambiguous manner.

Secondly the government must look at the over all distribution of funds to elderly people. Presently residential care and hospitals get the majority of funding despite people preference for staying in their own homes and communities. In addition a recent internal HSE report confirmed that 80% of residential care clients had never even been assessed for home care. Also 16% of those in residential care are deemed low dependency and a further 29% medium dependency. A large percentage of these people would be perfectly suitable for care in the community where in many cases they would prefer to be and where the costs for caring for them would be considerably less.

In these times of austerity, we need to ensure that we are spending our limited funds where they have most effect.

Carer of the Quarter

Sarah Jane joined us this year but she has already made a huge impact with her open and caring personality. Sarah Jane has completed a BA in DIT as well as receiving a higher diploma in Social Policy from UCD. Her aim is to become a social worker and with this in mind she is hoping to do a Masters degree in Social Work.

Sarah Jane works with several different



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clients and they all guard her jealously! She seems to be always in good form and is able to adopt to any situation always dealing with issues in an understanding and compassionate way.

Outside her work with Home Care Plus Sarah Jane enjoys travelling with Sweden and Africa being areas she has visited. She speaks Irish and French as well as having a bit of Swedish and Sesotho picked up on her travels!

Sarah Jane has also been involved in community work as a youth worker in Greystones as well as an active citizenship programme for youth called Urban Soul.

10 Tips For Healthy Ageing

The choices that you make now can affect how you'll age later. There are some things you can do to keep that "fountain of youth" flowing for yourself and it goes much further than just having good genes. Remember, genes only account for a third of healthy aging — the rest is up to you. Below are some simple tips to help you age gracefully:

1. Get your potassium

Stay strong as you age by eating potassium-rich vegetables — potatoes, leafy greens — and fruits, such as bananas and papayas. People 65 and older who loaded up on these foods kept as much as 3.6 percent more lean muscle tissue than those who consumed less, according to a study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. That's important because most of us typically lose about 4.4 pounds of muscle mass a decade (starting at age 65). This muscle loss can lead to falls and their sometimes devastating health consequences.

Strive for the recommended 4.7 grams daily of potassium; eating five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables should do it. To hit that goal, make a conscious effort to include one or two servings at each meal. And monitor your intake of salt, which can deplete potassium levels.

2. Think positively

A cheery outlook may actually extend your life. An analysis of 30 follow-up studies in the *Journal of Happiness Studies* found that being happy can protect you from becoming ill. Indeed, the effect of happiness on lifespan is about as strong as not smoking, say researchers. Another study showed that people who report being happy and satisfied with their lives are more likely to enjoy good health and fewer long-term, limiting health concerns. It's true that being happy is easier said than done for some people, but you can learn optimism by practicing stress-management techniques, meditating, and surrounding yourself with upbeat people.

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3. Lace up

Are your runners buried in your closet? Go dig them out. According to a study in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, if you stay aerobically fit, you can delay biological aging by 10 or more years and prolong your independence. A study in Circulation that tracked participants for an average of 7.5 years showed that exercise is inversely related to death: The more you work out, the longer you'll likely live. Numerous other studies link exercise to healthy aging. You don't need to run a marathon to get results. Research shows that it's better to get moderate daily exercise than to do a huge workout a few days a week.

4. Join the culture club

Probiotics, the so-called friendly bacteria, may play a role in the prevention of certain diseases. More research is needed, but they've been linked to improved immunity and decreased rates of colon cancer. Anecdotally, some of the zones where people live the longest also happen to be places where the diet has a variety of fermented foods, which contain probiotics. Include these foods — yogurt with live cultures, for example, as well as unpasteurized kimchi — in your diet, and consider taking a daily probiotic supplement (read the label for dosage), such as Lactobacillus GG or Bacillus coagulans 30.

5. "B" smart

Keep your brain healthy with vitamin B12, found in such foods as seafood and poultry. A recent study found that people with low blood levels of this nutrient experienced a faster decline in cognitive function than those with higher levels. On the flip side, people who consume plenty of B12-rich foods are six times less likely to experience brain shrinkage. Most of us can get enough B12 from our diet, but certain people need supplements, such as vegans (who don't eat animal products). The same goes for some people older than 65, because decreased levels of stomach acid can make it difficult to absorb B12 from food. Studies recommends these groups take B12 as part of a B-complex supplement.

6. Make fish a habit

Certain fatty fish contain high amounts of two omega-3s critical to healthy aging — eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Numerous studies show that these healthy fats can help lower the risk of heart disease and heart attacks. In a 2008 Neurology study, researchers found that older people who ate omega-3-rich fish at least three times a week had a nearly 26 percent lower risk of brain lesions associated with stroke and dementia than those who didn't eat fish regularly. EPA and DHA also may protect



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your eyes; people who eat fatty fish just once a week are 50 percent less likely to develop age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness in older adults. Aim for two servings of fatty fish a week. Good sources include herring, salmon, tuna, and trout.

7. Pal around

Don't let connections fall by the wayside. Research suggests that loneliness can increase the risk of high blood pressure, depression, and Alzheimer's disease, as well as lower immunity. On the other hand, "socializing appears to enhance health, and may even increase longevity," says Thomas Perls, M.D., an associate professor of medicine and geriatrics at Boston University's School of Medicine and the founder and director of the New England Centenarian Study. Friends and family don't live close by? Preliminary studies suggest that online social networking through services like Facebook and Twitter may provide similar effects.

8. Get more D

Vitamin D is one of our major defenses against many age-related diseases. Indeed, a large study in the Archives of Internal Medicine (US) found that people with the lowest blood levels of D had a higher risk of dying from all causes during the median 7.7-year study period. Other recent research reports similar results. Additional studies indicate vitamin D may help protect against cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, certain cancers, and some autoimmune disorders. Dietary sources of D include fish, eggs, and fortified milk; our bodies also make D in response to sunlight. But most of us don't get enough so we could look at supplements.

9. Do Tai Chi

Often described as "meditation in motion," this ancient form of stretching and balance can help you age well. Numerous studies suggest that tai chi may improve everyday physical functioning, lower blood pressure, ease chronic pain, relieve anxiety, and slow bone loss after menopause. It also shows promise for alleviating insomnia, a common problem in the elderly: A study in the journal Sleep found that people age 59 to 86 who regularly practiced a form of tai chi got more z's and better sleep quality than those who didn't. Tai chi is fairly simple to do once you learn how. Check adult education centres or health clubs for classes.

10. Reduce red meat

Make red meat an occasional indulgence — no more than once a week, suggest experts. Its saturated fat can clog arteries, raising the risk of cardiovascular disease. It may also boost cancer risk. A recent study found that people who consumed the highest amounts of red meat (equal to about a quarter pound of hamburger a day) had a 20 to 60 percent higher risk of developing certain cancers than those who ate less. Red meat also contains high levels of iron, too much of which has been linked to a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease. Replace red meat with fish, poultry, or whole, organic soy foods such as tempeh.

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Dementia Training For Carers

Home Care Plus recently sent some of our carers on a dementia training course in St. James Hospital. Their education programmes are designed to respect and build on the experiences and knowledge of carers. 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.

Notes From A G.P.



Ageing is ok, isn't it?

"You know you've hit middle age when your memories become more important than your dreams."

This was a quote from the recent finale of "Desperate Housewives" when one of the characters was struggling with the decision whether she was happy to remain as a happily married housewife living in small town USA or pursue her dream of becoming a chief executive in New York with the risk of breaking up her marriage.

Being middle-aged myself the statement made me think about my life now and what will I be like when I'm older.

What age would you consider to be

middle aged? Officially I don't think there is any definitive age but some commentators suggest anything from age 25 to 75. I think that's reasonable. The current average lifespan in Ireland is age 76 for men and 81 for women. So

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it may be fairer to say that middle-age isn't a number but rather a state of mind. I have read one commentator describe middle age as "that point in your life when you shift from seeing the future in terms of your potential and begin to see it in terms of your limitations."

But there is good news out there as we become older. Psychologist, Laura Carstensen from Stanford University has done research which demonstrates that as people get older they become happier, more content and have a more positive outlook on the world.

Ageing brings some rather remarkable improvements; increased knowledge, expertise and emotional aspects of life improve. She says older people are happier than both middle-aged and young people. She found that stress, worry and anger all decrease with age. In her study she found that older people were more positive, they were more likely than younger people to experience mixed emotions -sadness and at the same time you experience happiness. For example that tear in your eye when you're smiling at a friend.

There is a paradox of ageing, it's that recognising that we won't live forever changes our prospective in a positive way. As our time horizons grow shorter, our goals change and we know we don't have all the time in the world .We are able to recognise our priorities and take less notice of trivial matters. We have a greater appreciation of life and living it to its fullest , rather than waiting for tomorrow.

With this knowledge about later life , as our bodies slow down ,our brain seems to shift up a gear, we should be embracing ageing and all it has to offer.

When people ask me what stage do I think I'm at in life , I reply the same way every year, "I think I'm halfway there!"

Pearls of Wisdom

A bank is a place that will lend you money if you can prove that you don't need it.

Bob Hope (1903 - 2003)

An economist is an expert who will know tomorrow why the things he predicted yesterday didn't happen today.

Laurence J. Peter (1919 - 1988)

If you want to know what God thinks of money, just look at the people he gave it to.

Dorothy Parker (1893 - 1967)

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