



# HOME CARE PLUS

trusted care at home



Autumn 2010

## CARE TIMES

Welcome to our Autumn 2010 newsletter. While the weather this year has been a bit patchy it has been an improvement on the last few years. Whenever the sun has appeared, we have been reminded that there is no better place to live than our own green isle.

In this issue we give some information on dementia and practical tips on helping someone with dementia. We also feature our carer of the quarter, Eamon Gaines, some thoughts on ageing from Dr. Michael O'Brien and a summary of an independent quality audit we commissioned to evaluate our working practices.

I hope you enjoy this issue and please don't hesitate to contact us with any suggestions or comments.

Regards,

Michael Harty  
Director

# Home Care Plus Receives Highest Mark In Quality Audit

At Home Care Plus we place great relevance on evidencing our claims of quality and professionalism. We carry out regular anonymous client and carer questionnaires to ascertain their views of our work practices as well as carrying out constant supervision of the services we are providing.

In an effort to get a full overview of the standards we are working to, we recently commissioned a comprehensive quality audit by a recognised independent UK quality assurance company. In the absence of official quality standards for the home care sector in Ireland, their brief was to assess us in relation to the 27 National Minimum care Standards for Domiciliary Care Agencies in the UK.

During their audit they examined in detail our policies and procedures, records on carers and clients, care plans as well as interviewing both clients and carers to ascertain their views on Home Care Plus.

In summary their conclusion was that Home Care Plus achieved an excellent standard of quality care for their client group. They awarded us their highest mark of 4 stars. They stated that “During the course of the interface quality survey it became apparent that the management are heavily focused on reviewing and updating their systems and policies to assist in achieving this high standard. The management and staff place great emphasis on providing a quality service which in turn meets the needs of the varying client group.” They also concluded “that Home Care Plus is a first class well run specialised domiciliary care service that is highly committed, which could only be said to be no more than excellent”.

Some of the client reaction in the interviews included

“They are top of the bunch”

“It’s a gold star service”

“Our carer smiles all the time and takes away my stresses”

Home Care Plus is committed to ensuring that going forward, we continue to work to the high standards evidenced by this independent audit.

# Notes From A G.P.

Mark Twain once said “life would be infinitely happier if only we could be born at the age of 80 and gradually approach 18.”

As I approach middle age, the definition of which has never been explained to me, the age at which I define middle age seems to be getting older and older.

With many of my patients who are now elderly, I asked them “What age do you feel?”

I am delighted to tell you that none of them feel their present age, they in fact felt mentally as bright as they were in their 20s. They usually pick an age at which they were happiest and stick at that. Physically many feel as if they’re only approaching their 60s.

This is great to hear as it tells us that ageing is more a physical than a mental process. We are as young as we like to think we are. Our limitations are only of a physical nature not a mental one. Please don’t interpret this as a doctor telling you that you should complete your first marathon or that you should take up skydiving. What I’m trying to say is that the ageing process should be embraced.

Ask any 20-year-old what they consider old age to be, they would most likely give you the age of their parents. Ask their parents what they consider old age to be and they most likely will give you the age of their own parents.

I’ve settled on a quote I read “old age is 15 years older than I am” I don’t fear old age as I once did. Instead of thinking of it as a tragedy when the joints become a little bit stiffer or when we can’t move as fast as we once did, I see it as a transition, moving from one phase of our life into another. No longer are we self-conscious, nor do we pay too much attention to other people’s lives. The mortgage has been paid off, the kids have flown the nest and we no longer have responsibilities to others. It is “me” time! A time to be selfish and do things that you have always wanted to do. Answerable to no one. I know of many people who because of the many responsibilities that they once had, didn’t have the time to immerse themselves in their love of gardening, writing, poetry golf or even fishing.

With age comes an appreciation of life, love, family, health, friendship and much more. On a day-to-day basis I come across stories of people who have had many tragedies



fallen upon them and I realise life is precious irrespective of one's age. I suppose that means I'm becoming wise, something those younger can only obtain with time. George Burns summed it up best when he said "who wants to be 95? ----- 94year olds!"

## Carer Of The Quarter – Eamonn Gaines

Eamonn has been working with Home Care Plus since the spring of this year. Eamonn has 25 years service as a First Aid / First Response volunteer and as such has clinical experience of dealing with both young and old as well as slightly and critically injured people. He has strong communication skills and maintains a good rapport with all his clients while respecting their autonomy and dignity.

Eamonn has a BA from NUI Dublin as well as a MA from NUI Maynooth.

Eamonn's interests include philosophy and reading. He is married with one child.



## Dementia

### What is dementia?

Dementia is not a single illness. It is a group of symptoms caused by specific brain disorders. The most common cause is Alzheimer's disease, but dementia can also be the result of a stroke or mini-strokes.

The main symptoms are:

- loss of memory – such as forgetting the way home from the shops, forgetting names or places, or being unable to remember what happened earlier in the day
- mood changes – because of damage to parts of the brain that control emotions, people can become frightened, angry or sad more easily
- communication problems – a decline in the ability to talk, read and write

Dementia is progressive – the symptoms will get worse over time. Although there is no cure, treatments can slow the progression of the disease, and there are ways of helping to keep it manageable.

## Understanding dementia

In Ireland, it is estimated that some 38,000 people are likely to have dementia. Because our population is ageing, these figures are likely to reach between 80 000 and 100 000 over the next 30 years. Both men and women are affected.

Becoming forgetful does not necessarily mean that someone has dementia: memory loss can be a normal part of ageing, and it can also be a sign of stress or depression. If you know someone who is worried about their memory, encourage them to visit their GP. A proper diagnosis of dementia is essential. The doctor – either a GP or a specialist – will carry out a number of tests, looking at both memory and the ability to perform daily tasks. The doctor will also aim to rule out any illnesses that might have similar symptoms to dementia, including depression. The right diagnosis, whatever it may be, can help patients and those close to them prepare and plan for the future.

### Five simple ways to help someone living with dementia

- 1 **Respect and dignity** : Focus on what the person can do, not what they can't.
- 2 **Be a good listener and be friendly** : Support and accept the person, be patient.
- 3 **Do one little thing** : Cook a meal or run an errand, it all helps.
- 4 **Make time for everyone** : Partners, children and grandchildren will be affected. Could you do something to help one of them?
- 5 **Find out more** : Understanding dementia makes living with it easier.

### Practical tips

Especially in the early stages, there are lots of simple things you can do to help someone with dementia maintain their independence.

- encourage them to keep a notebook or diary for things such as appointments, To Do lists, thoughts and ideas
- keep important things like money, glasses and keys in the same place
- put labels on doors and cupboards
- place important numbers by the phone where they can be seen easily
- put a note on the back of the door as a reminder to take keys
- label family photographs, both on display and in albums
- pin a weekly timetable to the wall
- mark a calendar with the date or get an electronic calendar that changes automatically
- write reminders to lock the door at night, turn the gas off and put the rubbish out on a certain day

There are products you can buy which are designed to help with memory problems – telephones where buttons are replaced with photos of people, and pill boxes with compartments for different days. An occupational therapist may be able to advise you on

what things could be most useful (you can find an occupational therapist through your GP or social services).

## Keeping active

People with dementia can continue to enjoy many activities, both individually and with others. Remaining physically and mentally active can help them focus on the positive and fun aspects of life.

Many beneficial activities can be simple everyday tasks, such as taking a walk, polishing a pair of shoes, listening to the radio or looking after a pet. Think about ways of adapting favorite activities (for example, reading magazines and newspapers rather than books), to help the person avoid feeling frustrated that they can't tackle things they previously took for granted.

Keeping active can help the person feel better about themselves by providing a structure to the day and a sense of achievement.

## Showing you understand

A diagnosis of dementia can cause different emotions, many of them difficult to manage both for the person with the illness and those around them. There may also be a sense of relief: now that they know what the problem is, they can begin to deal with it.

A person with dementia will probably be sad or upset at times. In the earlier stages, they may want to talk about their anxieties and the problems they are experiencing. Try to understand how they feel, and don't brush their worries aside. Listen, let them talk, and show that you are there for them. When someone has dementia, they need:

- reassurance that they are still valued, and that their feelings matter
- freedom from as much external stress as possible
- appropriate activities and stimulation to help them to remain alert and motivated for as long as possible.

Many people who have dementia develop what appears to be unusual or inappropriate behavior. Remember their actions may be perfectly rational to them. You may need to think about how their altered view of the world may lead to different ways of thinking and behaving.

A person with dementia is not being deliberately difficult: often their behavior is an attempt to communicate. If you can establish what this is, you can resolve their concerns



more quickly. Try to put yourself in their place and understand what they are trying to express and how they might be feeling.

## Support services

It is worth thinking ahead about support available, so it will be easier to organize if needed in the future.

- Social services have a duty to assess the needs of people with dementia. Help may be in the form of home care assistants, laundry services, meals on wheels or nursing care
  - Day care centres are often run by voluntary organisations such as Alzheimer's Society, or by social services. They can be a great source of support both to the person with dementia and those who are caring for them
  - Respite care is short-term care used as a temporary alternative to someone's usual care. It gives the carer an essential break from looking after the person with dementia
- Other sources of support include hospital care, sheltered housing and residential care. Your GP or social services will know what is available in your area.

## Other useful information and organizations

### The Alzheimer Society of Ireland

National Office: Temple Road, Blackrock, Co Dublin

Tel (01) 207 3800 // Fax (01) 210 3772 // Email [info@alzheimer.ie](mailto:info@alzheimer.ie)

### Dementia Services Information and Development Centre

Top Floor, Hospital 4,

St. James's Hospital,

James's Street,

Dublin 8, Ireland

<http://www.dementia.ie/>

[dsidc@stjames.ie](mailto:dsidc@stjames.ie) +353 1 4162035

### The Carers Association

Ireland's national voluntary organisation for and of family carers in the home. Family carers provide high levels of care to a range of people including frail older people, people with severe disabilities, the terminally ill and children with special needs: [www.carersireland.com](http://www.carersireland.com)

### Health Service Executive

The Health Service Executive provides thousands of different services in hospitals and communities across the country. These services include public health nurses treating older people in the community. This website also includes published Nursing Home Inspection Reports: [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

# PA Consulting Report

During the summer months an interesting report drawn up by the PA Consulting Group and commissioned by the Irish Private Homecare Association was published. The report analysed the Irish home care market.

The report identified two main changes needed to ensure enough capacity is provided in a safe and efficient manner to meet expected future demand. These were

- Greater transparency of cost of home care provision is required to inform purchasing decisions and identify opportunities for savings
- The market must be regulated to safeguard home care customers

The report goes on to say that it feels the HSE could get more value for money by introducing competition into the market. From its own analysis it felt that there was significant cost differential between providers.

In these times of financial constraint, it is important that we are getting as much “bang for our buck” as possible to ensure the minimum of cuts to frontline services.

## Pearls of Wisdom

Aging is not ‘lost youth’ but a new stage of opportunity and strength.

**Betty Friedan (1921 - 2006)**

Always be nice to those younger than you, because they are the ones who will be writing about you.

**Cyril Connolly (1903 - 1974)**

I was always taught to respect my elders and I’ve now reached the age when I don’t have anybody to respect.

**George Burns (1896 - 1996)**