



HOME CARE PLUS

trusted care at home

SUMMER 2011 NEWSLETTER

What a great run we have had with our spring weather. Hopefully this won't have a detrimental effect on our summer's prospects!

In this month's newsletter we introduce our new team member Siobhan O'Connor RGN, we give our view on the Prime Time programme follow up on their exposé from last year, we have some information from the first results from TILDA, as well as our regular comments from Dr. Michael O'Brien.

Also we would like to let you know that we are organising a day out to a concert in the National Concert Hall for Tuesday 14/06 for any of our clients past or present and family members. We have sent out letters about the day so let us know if you are interested in attending.

Michael Harty
Director



Top Marks for Home Care Plus in Independent Audit

At Home Care Plus we carry out yearly independent audits by recognised home care experts to ensure that we are living and breathing our policies and procedures and that the quality of care we provide is second to none. This is in addition to having a home care consultant as part of our team whose sole role is to ensure that we are providing care in line with internal HSE standards as well as international best practice.

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Our audit for this year has just been carried out and we are pleased to report that we were deemed to have passed all the relevant standards that we were examined on. The standards examined were in connection with user focused services, personal care, protection, managers and staff as well as organisation and running of the business. The summary stated that Home Care Plus is a “professional, well managed service” who “is committed to ensuring a quality service and has quality monitoring and management systems in place”.

Siobhan O'Connor RGN



Home Care Plus recently took on Siobhan O'Connor RGN as a nurse supervisor. Siobhan has extensive experience both in the home care sector as well as in clinical situations. She also has experience in management and commercial roles.

Her role will include primarily client assessments and supervisions but she will also be involved in liaising with HSE personnel, G.P.'s, hospitals and relevant care organisations.

She is a great addition to our team and will ensure our continued commitment to providing quality care.

Siobhan is presently showing great discipline in refusing biscuits at coffee time putting the rest of the office to shame!

TILDA RESULTS

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) is the most detailed study on ageing ever undertaken in Ireland. This ground-breaking study looks at the health, lifestyles and financial situation of 8,000 to 10,000 people as they grow older, and sees how their circumstances change over a 10 year period.

Some of the areas the study looked at include

- Older people as members of their families and communities
- Social engagement of older people
- Behavioral and physical health of older people
- Mental health and cognitive functions of older people
- Health and social care utilisation
- Retirement and labour market participation of older people
- Income and asset levels of older people
- Older people's quality of life and beliefs about ageing

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The results of the area of social engagement of older people were summarised as follows

Social engagement comprises participation in leisure activities and volunteering, and connectedness to family and friendship networks. Social scientists have a long-standing interest in the effects of leisure participation among older persons. Participation in leisure activities is associated with a lower risk for negative mental and physical health outcomes and mortality. Many studies have shown that engaging in voluntary work in later life predicts better self-rated health, functioning, physical activity, and life satisfaction, and also decreases depression, hypertension, and mortality among older people. Conversely, loneliness has been shown to predict a wide variety of negative mental and physical health outcomes, such as depression, nursing home admission, and mortality. People also engage with their communities through religion, and participation in religious activities has been associated with better quality of life and health outcomes in older persons.

Among the key findings are the following:

- Approximately 90% of older people visit with family and friends once a week or more. Frequency of visits increases with age, and women visit with family and friends more frequently than men.
- One in five older people aged 65-74 do voluntary work at least once a week or more.
- Participation in formal organised activities, including volunteering, is greatest among older adults with high levels of education.
- Similar proportions of older men and women (around 10%) are engaged in high intensity voluntary work.
- Quality of life increases with greater social integration.
- In Ireland 6% of older women and 7% of older men are socially isolated.
- Older persons with poorer self-rated health are most likely to be socially isolated.
- Among the 95% of the older Irish population who report having a religion, 60% attend religious services at least once a week. Nearly 80% of people aged 75 and over attend a religious service once a week or more.
- Over 80% of older adults voted in the 2007 general election.
- Three-quarters of the older population rely on cars as their main mode of transport.

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Prime Time Follow Up on Home Care Scandal

Recently Prime Time did a segment on home care asking what has changed since their expose of the sector in December of last year.

The main change since that programme has been the implementing of a tender process for enhanced home care services by the HSE. However unions, home helps and some not for profit organisations have inexplicably been complaining about this tender using the scare phrase of “privatising of home care”.

They are starting from the premise that anything done by private enterprise can't be trusted and is of poor quality. They are also assuming that the provision of care by the HSE and not for profits is above reproach. The issue here is not whether care is provided for directly by the state or by private companies, but that the provision of care at the moment is unregulated who ever it comes from.

The tender is the first step in bringing in standards into the industry that everyone will have to meet whether they are private enterprise or state agencies.

It has in fact been the private sector who has been shouting loudest for the introduction of regulation into the sector. It is the better private companies who are leading the way with regards to best practice. These companies have robust recruitment and training policies in place including Garda vetting, reference checking and induction training. They also have extensive supervision and complaints policies in place to ensure the protection of the vulnerable adults they are caring for.

Many private providers also have independent audit checks in place to evidence the quality of care that they are carrying out.

Another charge in the programme was that this tender is going to precipitate a charge to the bottom with regards pricing and subsequently affect the quality of care. Nothing could be further from the truth. The weighting given to price in this tender is significantly lower than the 50% most government tenders have nowadays in an effort to bring down costs.

The whole emphasis in the tender is on quality not price. There are extensive questions on recruitment, training, supervision and complaints policies that the successful providers will have to meet. This tender for the first time puts quality and accountability at the core of home care provision.

With regards to the price element, this tender will force the HSE and “not for profits” for the first time to properly cost the provision of home care. It will mean that the days of companies getting funds with no accountability on how those funds are being spent is coming to an end. It will mean that without compromising on the quality of care, the state will be getting value for money which means that more needy persons will be able to access the care they need.

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The only negative aspect of this tender is that it is for a very limited part of the home care market and therefore its positive effects will be somewhat limited. The tender is only for new and enhanced home care packages which will account for only about 5-10% of the 350M market.

The tender should have encompassed all the home care market including home help in order to ensure that quality standards become prevalent throughout the industry.

Carer of the Quarter



Our carer of the quarter is Ray McCarthy. Ray starting working with us in early 2010. She works with several different clients and has built up a great bond with all of them. She has a great understanding of the social and companionship side of caring and is also always willing to help in last minute situations.

Ray has experience in looking after her brother-in-law as well as her own mother who in fact ran her own nursing home when Ray was younger.

Ray is very proactive and has great "get up and go" shown by the fact that she ran her own beauty business and a bed and breakfast in Kerry previously.

Elderly Social Interaction - Keeping Loved Ones Involved

Elderly Social Interaction - Keeping Loved Ones Involved

The emotional well being of your elderly loved one is just as important as their physical health and wellness. Social interaction is important for seniors, just as any other age group, to help stave off feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety. Caregivers should realize that social interactions of the elderly is as much a part of the caregiving experience as eating, grooming, and bathing.

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Elderly social interaction among seniors helps to prevent loneliness and a sense of isolation. Interactions with adult children and with extended family members, grandchildren, neighbours and friends are a vital component to the mental and emotional wellness of a senior.

Studies conducted in the past have shown a greater increase in depression as well as medical conditions in those who don't receive adequate social support and interaction with others. In 1998, a study was performed on women that determined that those who are experiencing depression and lack of social interaction were found to have more heart conditions, surgeries, and experienced death from cardiovascular disease than those who engaged in regular interactions with others at least on a weekly basis.

Keeping Your Loved One Engaged

Elderly Social interaction doesn't have to take place face-to-face in order for seniors to feel a sense of belonging and connection with others. In this way, the Internet offers unique opportunities for today's generation of seniors. Social networking sites, e-mail, chats and telephony methods provided by computer usage has enabled individuals to reach out to individuals not only in the same town, but around the world.

A telephone call every evening or several times a week also goes a long way in lifting the spirits of a senior living by herself, and ensures that she's not forgotten. Aging in place is a concept growing in popularity around the world as rising healthcare costs prevent many seniors from moving into assisted living or long-term nursing facilities as they age.

Because of this, it's important for caregivers, families and friends of the elderly to be creative and unique when it comes to keeping a senior engaged in activities, interactions and relationships with others. Even adult children who don't live close to their parent can provide accessibility to the senior, especially in computer or Internet-based environments. Web cams to robotic companions are just some of the ways that the elderly can be engaged in a social community. Computer games may also be utilized to encourage and promote social interaction. Games like Nintendo's Wii offer a variety of game formats that can be catered to a senior's physical and cognitive levels in group environments.

Caregivers should also realize the difference between merely spending time in the same room as an elderly person and engaging them directly in conversation, games, and activities.

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Encouraging Elderly Social Interaction

Like all of us, there are days when Mum and Dad may not feel very sociable. They, like their caregivers and other family members do go through periods of mild depression, disappointment, or just want some time alone to think. However, learning how to recognize deepening isolation, depression and anxiety is important for caregivers.

Caregivers and other family members should realize that socializing may help deal with memory problems and improve cognitive levels. The degree toward which a senior engages or retreats from elderly social interaction may also reflect similar changes in their physical or mental health and wellness.

Discuss preferences with your parent or grandparent. What would they like to do? If they can choose activities one or two days a week, what would they want to do? Go sightseeing? Visiting with friends? Visiting the local library or museum? Volunteering? With family, friends and the seniors involved, discuss ways to keep them engaged in feeling useful in the community and within the family unit.

The key to elderly social interaction is communication. Don't hesitate to communicate with your loved ones to determine their preferences and desires when it comes to venturing outside the home.

Notes From A G.P.



As a reader of the Irish Times I came across a letter from Maureen Eilish Purcell, from Co Louth who wrote movingly about the benefit of having a carer in her home, if even for just one hour a day.

“Madam, our-up until recently, I was the sole carer of my 90 old beloved mother. I was struggling, an absolute wreck and I wondered how I could keep going. I am not a nurse but because I have had five children, I thought I could do it. I tried for nearly 2 years, but as my mother's mind deteriorated, I realised that I was not really capable and, as I would never put in a home, I was at my wits end.

I had no idea I could ask for help from the HSE but now I have a home carer who comes in for one hour every morning, Monday to Friday excluding holidays and bank holidays.

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My carer has made such a difference. The one hour in the morning has saved my sanity and my own health. She washes, cleans and dresses my mother, then brings her downstairs for breakfast. She's very efficient but not officious. I often hear my mother laughing with her. She is gentle and kind and my mother really looks forward to her coming, as I do. I really don't know how she does what she does in the one-hour allocated to me.

There is one thing I do know: I cannot do without her."

This one letter is able to put into words what it means for a carer to get extra help. Often we overlook the impact an elderly relative would have on their son or daughter and we think only of the patient. From reading the letter anyone can see the beneficial effect even just one hour has on the relationship between the daughter and her mother. Unfortunately what can often happen is that the carer just cannot keep going and long-term nursing in a home for a loved one may be the only option.

In the papers recently the state funded "A fair deal" (a nursing homes fee support plan) ran out of money for this year. A few days later it was announced that in fact €100 million from the fund was diverted into other HSE expenditure. It gives one an idea of where the needs of the elderly are seen from a HSE perspective.

As we get older, it is perhaps not wise to rely solely on the state to look after us. If I can afford it, I will be putting away money for that rainy day whether it be a nursing home or more likely helping me to remain in my own home. I do not want to be a burden to my loved ones.

One thing is for sure, we will all need help at some stage in the future, none of us are getting any younger.

Pearls Of Wisdom

Health is not valued till sickness comes.

Dr. Thomas Fuller (1654 - 1734),
Gnomologia, 1732

The surprising thing about young fools is how many survive to become old fools.

Doug Larson

Worries go down better with soup than without.

Jewish Proverb

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