



Activating Potential for Communication

Newsletter

Autumn 2011

Issue 74

Welcome to the Autumn 2011 edition of our newsletter.

In this issue, Sarah Cairns reports on the Specialised Early Care for Alzheimers (SPECAL) Workshop earlier this Autumn. It was the first of our International Dementia Trainer Series this year.

Marissa McCarthy considers the lessons for care providers in the poignant stories told by people with dementia, published in a new collection of narratives entitled *Tell Mrs Mill her husband is still dead*.

The first Alzheimer Café in Ireland will open its doors in Donnybrook on Thursday 1st December. The Alzheimer Café model was developed in the Netherlands and, very well established there, has spread to the UK and different parts of the world.

Dr Aimee Spector, who presented a short CST Workshop at our May 2011 Conference, is returning to Dublin later this month for her full one-day workshop. Some places are still available. See also details of other forthcoming workshops and events.

You will remember and I will soon forget

Whitman, L. 2011. *Journal of Dementia Care* 19(1).

Journal Review by Marissa McCarthy

This article is a review of a new collection of narratives from people with dementia called "Tell Mrs. Mill her husband is still dead", which was compiled by David Clegg.

What struck me in the initial paragraphs was how care staff often told David that residents were so advanced in their dementia that they were not worth talking to. Yet, David persisted, and with patience, being receptive and non-judgemental he transcribed narratives from 47 people with dementia. Again this illustrates how care workers often disengage with people with dementia thereby deactivating their potential for communication.

This book also appears to capture the experience of living with dementia and the frustrations that people experience. It is very important that care givers are aware of and attempt to comprehend the lived experience for people with dementia. What better way to learn and read about this experience than from the people themselves. As very little is written about the lived experience of dementia, this book appears to capture this aspect very effectively.

These narratives also convey to the reader the lived experience of living in a care home with a diagnosis of dementia. As Whitman (2011) points out, many chapters in this book will make uncomfortable reading for health care professionals. It was startling and thought provoking to read narratives from people with dementia about their experience of living in a care home. It also illustrates the lack of personhood (Kitwood 2007) and person-centred care that still exists in care homes.

People with dementia hold detailed memories and feelings behind these memories which were evident from these narratives. Feelings of guilt, pain and hurt from childhood are still deeply felt especially around major events in the past. Secrets from the past were also disclosed along with evidence of the inhibition that some people with dementia experience.

I agree with Whitman (2011) when she says that the most important lesson she took from this book was listening to the person with dementia, not only listening to the narratives that appear coherent but also to the narratives that the listener perceives as garbled as they may be the most telling

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Alzheimer Café introduced to Ireland



The Alzheimer Café Just launched in Donnybrook



Join us for a cup of tea and cake

at the first Alzheimer Café
Thursday, 1st December @ 7-9pm.
Avila Carmelite Centre,
Bloomfield Ave (off Morehampton Rd.),
Donnybrook, Dublin 4.
 Lots of Free Parking.

The Alzheimer Café is free of charge and open to people with dementia and their families.

The Alzheimer Café evening

- Hear a talk from a Health & Social Care professional
 - Meet others and share experiences
 - Enjoy a cup of tea and cake
 - Speak with one of our Health & Social Care Professionals and Volunteers.

To find out more
 Contact **085 277 9897**
 or email info@alzheimercafe.ie

The Alzheimer Café is an international concept launched in Ireland and supported by Sonas aPc, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI), Third Age, the Dementia Services Information and Development Centre (DSIDC), the Health Service Executive (HSE), Nursing Homes Ireland (NHI) and the Living with Dementia Programme (LiD) Trinity College Dublin.

www.alzheimercafe.ie

China Cups & Saucers Appeal

To help us create a lovely atmosphere for this, the first Alzheimer Café in Ireland, we'd like to use china tea-sets. If you have an old china set or a mis-match of china cups and saucers and you are happy to donate them to a worthy home here at the Alzheimer Café. Contact us at (085) 277 9897.

Join the Alzheimer Café Volunteer Team

The Alzheimer Café is a completely voluntary initiative. If you would like to help out at an AC evening, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

The Alzheimer Café is a safe and relaxed place where people with dementia, their families and health and social care professionals come together for a unique blend of education and support. It is a forum where people can exchange experiences and talk about dementia.

The Alzheimer Café is appreciative of Mary Black, Finbar Furey and their production companies, who produced a beautiful three-track CD to raise funds for the project. All proceeds from the €5 CD go to the Alzheimer Café.

Specialised Early Care for Alzheimers (SPECAL) Report on September 2011 SPECAL Workshop

By Sarah Cairns, Sonas Lead Tutor

The first of our autumn International workshops was delivered by Penny Garner in October 2011, which took place in the Tara Towers Hotel in Dublin. Penny is an extraordinary woman who delivered a diverse and interesting one day workshop. She demonstrates the experience of the person with a dementia, leading the group through elements of the 'Wrap Around' model of SPECAL Care.

With slides and props, using a photo album as a metaphor for people's memory, Penny enables the group to visualise events each of us file away daily. She gives a clear picture of how a person with a dementia processes information and emo-

tions, how the perceptions of facts diminish and how the person with a dementia is progressively communicating largely through feelings.

Through role play, Penny demonstrates two different ways of handling an experience of a person with dementia, in care. This dynamic way of teaching, left no one in doubt of our direct impact on the life of a person with dementia and how through the SPECAL Care model we can positively affect the wellbeing of the person through self esteem, the feeling of safety and security and companionship.

This hands on approach enables us as carers to contemplate our own methods of care and to recognise how our behaviour is vital for change, in the care for people with a dementia.



From left: Noreen Keane, Penny Garner, Myriam Vacher, Sarah Cairns



Testimonials

"I attended the SPECAL Photograph Album training day and found it very beneficial. The course was very well presented by Penny Garner with just the right amount of theory and practical information. This course has very much influenced the way in which I interact with clients with dementia and I am seeing the benefits of this approach already."

Nadine Murphy, Senior Speech and Language Therapist, Dublin North LHO.

Other comments

"Penny is a fantastic tutor and brought a lot of great ideas"

"A clear way of looking at dementia from the client's point of view, and a way of explaining it to my students that will promote respect and empathy with the individual [...] I feel inspired, whereas before I felt stale. Thanks."

"I got a lot of answers to questions that have caused me a lot of worry on behalf of some of my residents for a few years; I don't feel as helpless now"

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of all. Having read this article, my first thought is to order this book as soon as possible. We, as health care professionals need to learn from people with dementia, we need to listen, really listen and activate the potential for communication within each person with dementia within our care. *Reference:* Kitwood, T. 2007. *Dementia Reconsidered: the person comes first*. 13th ed. New York: Open University Press.

Forthcoming Conference

Keeping in Touch: Improving Communication for People with Dementia

Dementia Services Information and Development Centre (DSIDC) Autumn 2011 Conference

Date: Thursday 24th November, 2011.

Venue: Durkin Lecture Theatre, Trinity Sciences Centre, St James's Hospital, Dublin 8.

Speakers include Prof Clive Ballard, Dr Tony Young and Dr Maggie Ellis. To book, contact Lorraine Lovely on (01) 4162035 or Email dsidc@stjames.ie. Web: www.dementia.ie.

Learning to Use Dementia Care Mapping (Basic User Status)

Bradford Dementia Group

In Association with Dementia Training Ireland

This four-day course is partially funded by LHP Skillnet.

Date: 29th Nov, 2011—2nd Dec, 2011

Venue: Sacred Heart Hospital, Roscommon

For further details and to book, contact Dementia Training Ireland at (01) 287 3000 or (086) 044 7441. Email: admin@dementiatraining.ie.

Dementia Care Matters Diploma Course Dublin, Nov 2011 - Nov 2012

In association with Jackie O'Toole,
Dementia Training Ireland

Venue: Centre for Learning, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

For further information and to book, contact Dementia Care Matters, 29 Bloomsbury Place, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 1DB. Tel: 00 44 1273 242335. Email: admin@dementiacarematters.com or visit www.dementiacarematters.com. Discounts available for group bookings.

Forthcoming Workshops

Workshop Dates are currently being set for Spring 2012.

Locations will include:

- **Dublin**
- **Cork**
- **Galway**

Please email us if you wish to be informed once dates are set.

You may also check our website for further workshop updates. For any questions regarding workshops or quotes for in-house training, please contact Myriam Vacher, our Workshop Administrator.

International Dementia Trainer Series

Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) Workshop

With Dr Aimee Spector

Date: Friday 25th Nov, 2011

Venue: Tara Towers Hotel, Dublin 4

Dr Spector, Lecturer in Clinical Psychology in the University College London, is coming to Ireland to deliver her one-day workshop. Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) is the only non-drug therapy recommended by the UK NICE Guidelines (2007).

Contact Us

Address: St Mary's
201 Merrion Rd
Dublin 4
Ireland

Tel: + 353 (0)1 260 8138

Fax: + 353 (0)1 219 5937

Email: sonasapc@iol.ie

Website: www.sonasapc.ie