

Dementia and end of life care: special interest group event

Summary of sessions

Professor Claire Goodman, Professor of Health Care Research at the University of Hertfordshire, was our morning plenary speaker. Claire has a special interest in care homes and the older person. She offered a tremendously insightful perspective based on her research about the complexity and associated uncertainty in prognosticating, and how this affects care planning for the older frail person, especially with dementia. There was, she noted, an increasing lack of day care facilities for people with dementia. This point had resonated with many of those present who are seeing an increase to referral to their day services to meet primarily the social needs of the person and also their family carer. This poses pressure on the service, as often such a need cannot be met due to lack of resources or they do not meet service criteria.

Lindsey Collins, Dementia Care Consultant based at Bradford University kept us all riveted in the post lunch slot. Lindsey is a Dementia Care Consultant based at the School of Dementia studies Bradford University her special interest includes communication. Her presentation was incredibly empowering; showcasing a range of ways in which communication can happen in spite of severe cognitive impairment. She impressed upon us the importance of attending to this issue as it is often the primary cause of family breakdown with a profound impact all on concerned leading to depression, anxiety and social isolation.

We also heard from four inspiring colleagues who are leading locally on dementia related care. They shared quite candidly their successes and challenges. What shone through was their passion and commitment to getting care right and supporting all involved.

Sue Martin, Clinical Nurse Specialist Care Home Education, St Michael's Hospice (North Hampshire) presented on the challenges of end of life care for residents with dementia living in care homes. Sue begun working with six local care homes and has seen amazing developments through the introduction of a six steps programme for end of life care. She has seen the value of introducing validated assessment tools and guiding care discussion based on 'best interest' principles.

Helen Reeves, Clinical Nurse Manager, St Giles Hospice spoke about the positive impact of adopting a hospice philosophy in dementia care and how the 'Namaste' programme was contributing to that. She also shared the challenge of ensuring residents are identified much earlier in their disease trajectory to enable good symptom control and care planning.

Sian Harrison, Team Leader Dementia End of Life Practice Development Team from Winterley Grange, explained how this new team was improving end of life care through facilitation, education and helping with service development. It was very salient to hear about the stigma she encounters as she seeks to engage staff to talk about the 'double D: dementia

