



Care Alliance Ireland Exchange

Summer 2011

Issue 33

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Carers Week 2011 – the best yet



National Carers Week has become a significant event in the calendar of many organisations supporting Family Carers. With the support of leading Irish actors, National Lottery funds, Topaz, Unicare and, above all, partner organisations, this year's event was probably the best yet.

Over 40 organisations organised and took part in more than 150 events for Family Carers in every county in Ireland. This is a 40% increase on last year's figures.

In spite of increasingly tight budgets and limitations that this puts on service delivery, increased levels of collaboration have enabled a greater number of events involving more Family Carers to be organised. We estimate that in the region of 4,000 Family Carers took part in events including pamper days, health checks, seminars, tea dances, lunches and day trips.

The aim of the 5th Annual National Carer's Week was to highlight the contribution of Ireland's Family Carers. Media coverage was extensive including lengthy coverage during the week on the 1pm, 6pm and 9pm RTE News. Carers Week merchandise was also distributed by partner organisations.

Around 4,000 Family Carers took part in more than 150 events around the country

Developments this year included free health checks for Family Carers, an expansion of the schools competition and an enhanced profile of the week in Health Centres.

Care Alliance Ireland coordinates Carers Week in partnership with leading Irish voluntary organisations which support Family Carers. These include: The Carers Association, Caring for Carers Ireland, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Brí, The Disability Federation of Ireland, Extra-Care, Headway, and The Irish Hospice Foundation.

Organisations wishing to apply to become partners in Carers Week next year, please contact us on admin@carersweek.ie

See pages 6 and 7 for a round up of events around the country.

Actor Jim Bartley and family carers at the Carers Week launch



National Dementia Summit

On 16 June 2011, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland hosted a National Dementia Summit at Buswell's Hotel and Dáil Eireann to mark National Carers Week this year.

Further to the commitment to a National Dementia Strategy in the new Programme for Government, the aim of The Summit was for The Society to secure a mandate from carers and people living with dementia on what is needed in Ireland to live well with dementia. The Summit was a phenomenal success involving 21 family carers and people living with dementia from all over the country.

Following focus group sessions in the morning, CEO Maurice O'Connell led the group across to Dáil Eireann on the invitation of Minister for Disability, Older People, Equality & Mental Health Kathleen Lynch TD, where there was an opportunity for some of the country's politicians to hear more about the issues raised and for the participants to mingle with some of the local and relevant politicians.

This was followed by lunch in the Members' Restaurant. A number of people got a chance to speak to high profile politicians including the Minister for Health James Reilly TD and Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government Phil Hogan TD.

In the longer term we will be producing a report from the day that will be used to influence the development of a National Dementia Strategy and the lobbying efforts of The Society for years to come. This model has been used in Northern Ireland and Australia as an effective empowerment and advocacy tool. We will also be linking with all those who took part to thank them for their participation and inform them of the next steps in our lobbying campaign for a National Dementia Strategy by 2013.

Carers' Sanctuary Magazine Launched

by Aviva Cohen, Research & Hope

Carers' Sanctuary, an online magazine: www.carerssanctuary.com was launched on 1 May 2011. It is a free monthly magazine, created to support family carers. Each month, the magazine pinpoints a theme affecting people caring for loved ones in the home. The June edition focuses on sleep deprivation, while the July edition is all about travelling with a disability.

The magazine is a blend of information, support and humour. It includes inspirational interviews, articles on support services, stories and humorous anecdotes sent in by readers, and a great deal more. This month (July) includes a compelling interview with Lisa Domican, who cares for and travels with her two autistic children. Despite the challenges of being a carer, Lisa is an award-winning blogger and she has developed an iPhone app to help autistic people to communicate.

Carers' Sanctuary Magazine is the second online publication by the Research & Hope team, who also publish www.researchandhope.com a website that collates information on unusual but clinically tested treatments for stroke survivors.

Irish Heart Foundation Stroke Award Nominations

This November will mark the second year of the Irish Heart Foundation's national Stroke Awards to celebrate life after stroke and to honour the bravery of stroke survivors and their carers. If you know anyone who has shown exceptional courage after surviving a stroke, or has gone above and beyond the call of duty in caring for someone affected by the disease, we need your nominations now.

THE AWARD CATEGORIES INCLUDE:

1. Young people's bravery award
2. Adult Bravery Awards
3. Carer's Award
4. Boehringer Ingelheim Stroke Champion Award

TO MAKE A NOMINATION:

Visit our website at www.stroke.ie
Or you can get a nomination form by contacting Sarah Horgan at (01) 634 6925 or shorgan@irishheart.ie



Last year's Irish Heart Foundation's Carers Award winner was Teresa Reidy from Mayo who cares for her son, Damien. Teresa is pictured here on the left with awards MC, Marty Whelan, and Stroke Champion Award winner, Anne Copeland.

The closing date for nominations is Friday 30 September 2011.

Exploring the Experiences of Men Providing Care to a Loved One or Close Relative in Chronic Illness

Ann Stokes of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin is currently undertaking a research study as part of her PhD exploring the experiences of men providing care to a loved one or close relative in chronic illness.

Ann is interested in meeting with men to hear about their experiences as a man providing care to an adult family member with a chronic illness. Taking part in the study will involve talking with a researcher, at a time and place that is convenient for them. Participants will be asked questions about how looking after someone has affected their life. The rights of privacy and confidentiality will be protected during and after the study.

If you would like further information on how to participate in this study, please contact Ann Stokes on:

087 933 68 58

Email: astokes@tcd.ie

Clare Mental Health Services for Older People

In Association with:
**The Irish Hospice Foundation
The Alzheimer Society of Ireland
& Milford Care Centre**

Presents



Palliative Care and Dementia A Platform for Seeking Consensus

Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Julian Hughes

Consultant in Old Age Psychiatry in Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and an Honorary Professor of Philosophy of Ageing at the Institute for Ageing and Health, Newcastle University.

Conference Speakers:

Marissa Butler

ANP Dementia Care and Project Officer for Palliative Interventions for People with Dementia; Clare Mental Health Services for Older People.

Professor David Meagher

Professor of Psychiatry, University of Limerick.

Dr. Henry O'Connell

Consultant Psychiatrist of Old Age.

Dr. Marian Conroy

Consultant in Palliative Care Medicine, Milford Care Centre, Limerick.

Annie Dillon

Practice Development Manager, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland.



The One Day Conference includes:

- Palliative Care for People with Dementia
- Outcomes from Palliative Care for People with Dementia Project
- Dementia, Delirium and Palliative Care
- Developing a Dementia Care Strategy
- Palliative Care and Dementia in the Mid-West Region
- Findings from the Alzheimer Society of Ireland's 'Opening Conversations Project'

**Radisson Hotel,
Limerick**

27th September 2011

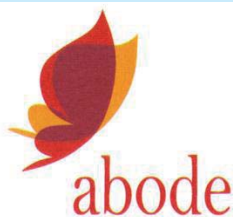
An Bord Altranais Approval CPD Points (ICGP, RCPI, ICPsych) - Applied For.

€30 Registration Fee. To register your interest in attending, please contact:

Marissa Butler at marissa.butler@hse.ie by the 31st of July 2011
and further details will be forwarded to you.



Supported by an educational grant from Lundbeck (Irl) Ltd. & Mundipharma Ltd.



Is now accepting applications
for its

**INDEPENDENT LIVING
PROGRAMME**

Abode in Cork City is now accepting applications for its INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMME. This is a FÁS Introductory Skills Programme, accredited by FETAC.

The course is designed for people with physical and sensory disabilities who have a genuine interest in exploring and developing the skills and confidence to live as independently as possible.

For further information, contact Clodagh at (021) 491 6180
Or email info@doorwaytolife.com

Check us out on www.doorwaytolife.com

Dates for Your Diary

9 September 2011

Building a Picture of Ageing in Persons with Intellectual Disability: Future Directions for Ageing Well

The Intellectual Disability Supplement to the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (IDS – TILDA) will launch its first major report on the lives of people with intellectual disability aged 40 years and over in Ireland as part of the study's 2nd International Research Conference to be held in Trinity College, Dublin.

The Report will draw on the findings from in-depth interviews with over 700 people with intellectual disability from across Ireland, providing the first comprehensive picture of people's lives across a range of key areas, including health, social, psychological, economic and environmental circumstances. Demand for places at this conference is expected to be high, so early registration is advisable.

Friday 9th September 2011

09.00-17.15

Edmund Burke Lecture Theatre,
Arts Building, Trinity College Dublin

Conference Website:

http://nursing-midwifery.tcd.ie/events-conferences/ids_tilda_2011_conference/index.php

27 September 2011

Palliative Care and Dementia - A Platform for Seeking Consensus

Clare Mental Health Services for Older People, in association with the the Irish Hospice Foundation, the Alzheimer Society of Ireland and Milford Carer Centre, will host a one day conference in the Radisson Hotel, Limerick on 27 September (details on page 4).

For more information please contact:

marissa.butler@hse.ie

29 September 2011

Caring Transitions report launch

Trinity College Dublin and Care Alliance Ireland will launch the Caring Transitions research report on Thursday 29 September.

The research focuses on the experiences of carers when caring comes to an end.

Full details to be announced shortly

23 September - 1 October 2011

Join Age Action in supporting Positive Ageing Week

ESB Electric Ireland Positive Ageing Week is a festival which highlights the positive aspects of ageing and celebrates the contribution older people have made and continue to make to their communities. Age Action, supported by ESB Electric Ireland, are asking individuals and groups to organise an event or an activity to celebrate Positive Ageing Week.

If you are interested in organising an activity or event please contact us on: 01-475 6989 or info@ageaction.ie for a Positive Ageing Week pack or apply online at

<http://www.ageaction.ie/esb-electric-ireland-positive-ageing-week>

Age Action

IRELAND

For All Older People

Positive Ageing Week



Marie Lynch,
Irish Hospice
Foundation,
speaking at the
National Carers
Week launch



National Carers
Week launch
with actor Jim
Bartley, Harry
Cahill and Ruth
Cahill

Tom Hopkins (actor), Jake
O'Driscoll (Award Winner),
Lord Mayor of Dublin Gerry
Breen, Anna Delaney (Award
Runner Up) at the award
presentation of the National
Carers Week Schools
Competition 'How we Care'



Crosscare Carers with
actor Tom Hopkins at the
National Carers Week
launch in the Mansion
House, Dublin on 13 June



The Carers Association Kildare, Pamper morning with Unicare Pharmacy



Family Carer Pamper Morning in Cavan



The Cavan Monaghan Carers Pamper Morning



The Lord Mayor of Cork at the Carers Association Office, Cork.

You can view a full list of Carers Week events that took place, together with a selection of photos and media coverage, at www.carersweek.ie

Carers Week in Northern Ireland was also a resounding success. For details see: <http://www.carersuk.org/news-northern-ireland/item/2182-party-leaders-putcaring-at-the-heart-of-theassembly>

Department announces Latest Carer Allowance and Benefit Figures

Almost 70,000 carers will receive Respite Care Grant this year, the Department of Social Protection has announced. The annual grant of €1,700 is available to all carers providing full-time care and attention to an older person or a person with a disability.

Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD, said: "The Respite Care Grant is paid to full-time carers in the first week in June each year. It helps carers to get some respite for themselves or for the person for whom they are caring. This year the amount of the grant is being maintained at €1,700 in respect of each care recipient."

Almost 70,000 carers will receive the €1,700 respite grant for each person they care for

The Grant is paid automatically to carers in receipt of schemes such as Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit and Domiciliary Care Allowance. The grant is not means-tested and other full-time carers who are not eligible for these schemes may apply separately for the grant. Carers who are providing full-time care for more than one person may be entitled to €1,700 in respect of each person that they are caring for.

The Department currently pays Carer's Allowance to more than 51,000 people. This includes approximately 21,000 who receive the half-rate Carer's Allowance, in addition to another social welfare payment. Another 1,700 carers receive the insurance-based Carer's Benefit and 23,500 receive Domiciliary Care Allowance.

<http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Press/PressReleases/2011/Pages/pr020611.aspx>

New IT System to Improve Processing Time for Carers Allowance

During a recent Dáil debate Joan Burton TD, Minister for Social Protection, revealed that her Department has recently commenced a major modernisation project to improve the efficiency with which it processes applications from clients for carer's allowance. This involves the development of a new information technology system.

Acknowledging that the time taken to process claims currently is not satisfactory, the Minister said she was confident the new system would be up and running by July of this year. The modernisation of IT facilities should achieve improvements in processing times.

During the debate, deputies Aengus Ó Snodaigh and Catherine Murphy also questioned the Minister on the complexity of the appeals process. In 2010, 18,212 new claims were made and 6,972 were refused, representing a refusal rate of 38.2%. However, the success rate on appeal is quite high, suggesting that carers need more information when completing the application.

Deputy Murphy claimed that "people are being put through the wringer unnecessarily".

Caring and Massage

Partners in Healing is an American site that provides practical tools, encouragement and inspiration to those who want to be a source of healing for a loved one.

You can learn to help someone you care about feel better and reduce the stress of illness, through healing massage.

www.partnersinhealing.net

Member Profile



**IRISH HEART
FOUNDATION**
Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

The Irish Heart Foundation, founded in 1966, is the national charity fighting heart disease and stroke. Our mission is to lead in improving the cardiovascular health of people living in Ireland so they do not experience disability or die from preventable heart, stroke and other blood vessel diseases. Heart disease and stroke are Ireland's biggest killers: nearly 10,000 lives are lost to cardiovascular disease each year – that's more than from cancer, suicide and road deaths combined.

Against this background we work to bring hope, relief and a better future to families all over Ireland. We give vital patient support through our Heart & Stroke helpline and we provide high quality public information for all.

Achievements

- Launched first national FAST stroke symptom campaign
- 27,000 Transition year students trained in CPR 2009
- 'Slí na Sláinte' signposted walking routes in 175 locations
- 65,000 people trained annually in lifesaving resuscitation skills to the Irish Heart Foundation standard

What Does the Irish Heart Foundation Do?

- Provides health information to patients, the general public and media through leaflets, our websites and awareness campaigns.
- Supports patients in managing heart disease and stroke through our Heart & Stroke Helpline, patient support groups and patient information days.
- Provides heart health programmes in schools and workplaces focusing on healthy eating and physical activity.
- Co-ordinates the training of medics and the public in emergency lifesaving resuscitation skills (CPR and how to use a defibrillator).
- Supports research, education and development in the medical profession.
- Advocates on patient treatment and services, as well as for an environment to make the healthier choice the easier choice.

Stroke Action Campaign

Up to 2,500 people die from stroke each year and up to 10,000 suffer stroke annually. Stroke is Ireland's biggest cause of acquired

adult disability and there are up to 50,000 people living with the affects of stroke in Ireland. The Foundation was the driving force behind the first national audit of stroke services launched in April 2008 followed by a Stroke Manifesto in Nov 2009 which

outlined a 16 point plan to improve stroke services.

In Jan 2010 a dedicated website www.stroke.ie was launched urging people to join the IHF campaign to end avoidable death and disability from stroke. We recently launched Stroke Watch on this website to allow stroke survivors and their carers

to share rehabilitation experiences with us so we can keep an eye on services in your area and lobby decision makers for change. This website also hosts the Stroke Forum, an online community for stroke survivors and their carers to chat and share experiences with each other at www.stroke.ie/strokeforum.

Prevention

Prevention is at the core of much of the Irish Heart Foundation's work. Research shows that a 47% drop in mortality from cardiovascular disease in Ireland between 1985 and 2000 is due to a 50/50 combination of treatment and prevention. The message is clear – the more risk factors we can eliminate, the greater a person's chance of not having a heart attack or stroke.

Every year we run campaigns targeting Irish adults to tackle risk factors such as high blood pressure, cholesterol, physical inactivity, smoking, diet and weight. Recent campaigns include Know Your Blood Pressure,

continues on page 12

Go Red for Women, Walk for Heart and later this year we will focus on men and heart attack.

Our health promotion team works hard to promote prevention across all ages starting with healthy eating and physical activity programmes in primary and secondary school, supported by government departments. We also target adults through our workplace programmes, providing health checks, catering audits to ensure healthier options are available on menus and creating Slí na Sláinte walking routes for employees as part of their working day.

Patient Groups

The Irish Heart Foundation has four affiliated patient groups on heart-related conditions – Sudden Cardiac Death in the Young, Long QT, Implantable Defibrillator group and the Cardiomyopathy patient group. Through these groups, we provide patients with detailed information on their condition and treatments and also help raise awareness around the conditions and their symptoms. Our support groups provide an important opportunity to meet people with similar conditions and share personal stories and practical advice. We also host patient information days with key experts which are well attended by group members.

Heart & Stroke Helpline 1890 432 787

The helpline is entirely funded by public donations. Anyone worried about heart or stroke problems can talk to an Irish Heart Foundation nurse in confidence on Locall 1890 432 787 (Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm).

Advocacy

As well as stroke, the IHF advocates on important issues such as obesity, tobacco control, heart failure, marketing of unhealthy foods to children and more. We also advocate to see the full implementation of the recommendations of the 2010 National Cardiovascular Health Policy Changing Cardiovascular Health.

Contact:

Irish Heart Foundation, Head Office, 4 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

Tel: 01 668 5001

Email: info@irishheart.ie

Web: www.irishheart.ie www.stroke.ie

www.facebook.com/irishheartfoundation

www.facebook.com/StrokeAction

www.twitter.com/strokeaction

Brain Stimulation and Stroke: Hope, Hype and Hard Facts

A lecture on brain stimulation and stroke, organised jointly by Research and Hope and Care Alliance Ireland, took place in Dublin on 15 June as part of National Carers Week.

Picture shows (L to R): Dr. Vincent Walsh, University College London; Liam O'Sullivan, Care Alliance Ireland; Aviva and Steve Cohen, Research and Hope.



Family Carers are hidden health crisis - Mayo Advertiser

<http://www.advertiser.ie/mayo/article/40403/local-carers-associations-condemn-hidden-health-crisis>

New Brain Injury Portal Launched - Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2011/0609/breaking60.html>

Lithium slows development of Alzheimers - The Independent

<http://www.independent.ie/health/latest-news/lithium-slows-development-of-alzheimers-2631952.html>

Dementia Care at Home - A Care Givers guide

<http://www.irishpressreleases.ie/2011/04/28/dementia-care-at-home-%E2%80%93-new-guide-for-family-caregivers/>

Carer Cutbacks are really hurting - The Nationalist

http://www.nationalist.ie/community/carers_cutbacks_are_really_hurting_says_mary_1_2729860

Highlight Plight of Carers - The Wicklow People

<http://www.wicklowpeople.ie/news/tom-highlights-plight-of-irelands-carers-2671229.html>

Appeal to Acknowledge Hard Work of Carers - RTE

<http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0613/carers.html>

Remember Hidden Carers This Week - Mayo News

http://www.mayonews.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12955:remember-hidden-carers-this-week&catid=68:off-the-fence&Itemid=100006

Dementia Home Carers Stretched to the limit - The Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/archive/2011/0510/Pg034.html#Ar03400:0313C40543D115C28817F29518A3A91AD3B60001E318E1F01B320C1DF21A1A533B1D03480E80BD1A310B12A21A14D22711F288141295>

New Carers Strategy by end of year - Irish Examiner

<http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/carers-strategy-by-end-of-the-year-158978.html>

Many Carers living below poverty line - Irish Examiner

<http://www.examiner.ie/breakingnews/ireland/carers-association-many-carers-living-below-poverty-line-511671.html>

Health Minister blames Family Carers plight on services neglect - Irish Examiner

<http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/reilly-blames-carers-plight-on-services-neglect-156463.html>

The Carers Association urge Carers to speak out against lack of Quality Services - Irish Examiner

<http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/carers-speak-out-against-lack-of-quality-services-156531.html>

Carers Association to launch Advocacy Campaign - Irish Examiner

<http://www.examiner.ie/breakingnews/ireland/carers-association-to-launch-advocacy-campaign-507262.html>

Social Connectedness and Family Carers in County Clare - My Home Reach Blog

<http://myhomereach.wordpress.com/2011/06/15/caring-for-carers-positive-action-following-commissioned-research-on-social-connectedness-of-family-carers-in-clare/>

Carers appeal for no further cuts to payments

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011/0707/1224300210898.html>

Disability services review pledged

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2011/0617/breaking99.html>

Manitoba Caregiver Recognition Act introduced

Legislation introduced in May in the Canadian province of Manitoba would establish a legislative framework to increase awareness and recognition of informal or family caregivers, and acknowledge their valuable contribution to society.

Key provisions of the Caregiver Recognition Act (CRA) would include:

- proclaiming the first Tuesday of April in each year Caregiver Recognition Day;
- creating general principles relating to caregivers, outlining how caregivers should be treated and considered when interacting with the public, health staff and in the workplace;
- instituting a progress report every two years, which would evaluate caregiver needs and supports;
- establishing a Caregiver Advisory Committee to provide the minister with information, advice and recommendations; and
- starting consultations with the minister and caregivers, organisations that provide care, appropriate government departments, the advisory committee and others.

The province would also establish a website for caregivers, which would provide centralised navigation to community and government resources.

According to the General Social Survey (2007), about one-fifth of Manitobans aged 45 and over reported providing assistance to a senior experiencing physical or other limitations due to a long-term health condition.

The proposed legislation is part of the province's Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative (AFMI), launched in 2008, that encourages policies, services and structures to support seniors in leading active, socially engaged and independent lives. AFMI continues to gain momentum throughout the province, with 80% of Manitoba's population living in communities that have committed to being age-friendly.

Source: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2011/05/2011-05-26-141100-11580.html>

Depression Among US Caregivers More Than Twice National Average

With the economy continuing to struggle and rising prices impacting Americans from coast to coast, caregivers are facing the increased burden of providing financial and emotional support to their loved ones. Online support service Caring.com have released the results of a new study in which 86% of caregivers said that caregiving impacted on their work situation because they had to take time away from their jobs, quit, retire early, reduce hours, or take a leave of absence (this excludes those who were already not working).

Twenty-five per cent of respondents also stated that they suffer from depression, well above the national figure of 9% cited in a 2010 study. To find support beyond family and friends, caregivers are turning to their churches or other religious organisations (31%). Family caregivers are also seeking support online (25%) via discussion forums, chat rooms, and through social networks such as Facebook.

Caring.com regularly surveys family caregivers and conducted this study in March 2011.

Source: <http://www.caring.com/about/news-room/depression-levels-among-caregivers-more-than-two-times-national-average-caring-coms-newest-study-reveals.html>

Summary of References to Family Carers and Caregiving in Initial TILDA Results

Care Alliance Ireland has undertaken a summary review of the initial TILDA (Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing) Research Project Results, published in May.

Specifically the references to Family Carers and Caregiving were reviewed, as follows:

- Over 70% of the age group most likely to need care and support (75 and over) live with their children or have at least one child living in the same county
- Half of 50-64 year olds with surviving parents provide help with household tasks to their parents, on average for 10 hours per week; over one quarter provide their parents with personal care, on average for 18 hours per week
- Nearly one-quarter of older people in Ireland provide some form of help to their neighbours and friends, on average for eight hours per month. Almost one-fifth of older people receive some form of help from their neighbours and friends
- More than one third of older adults provide practical household help including shopping and household chores to their adult children and nearly half provide care to grandchildren

- People with impairments in activities of daily living (ADL) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) receive on average 118 hours of help per month. The most common primary helper for this group is the recipient's spouse; this represents a large contribution by older adults into the care of older adults.

- Only 3.5% of people over 50 receive state-provided home help services.

- Of those with both ADL and IADL impairments, 12% do not receive formal or informal help and these people constitute a potentially very vulnerable group

The Executive Summary is available to view at: <http://www.tcd.ie/tilda/events/first%20wave%20results/ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

TILDA will launch its first major report on the lives of people with intellectual disability: **Building a Picture of Ageing in Persons with Intellectual Disability: Future Directions for Ageing Well** on 9 September

See page 5 for details

Seamless Support for Young Adult Carers

Dundee Carers Centre in Scotland has carried out a small-scale inquiry into the transition experiences of young adult carers aged 16 and over, as they are at risk of falling through the gap between children's and adult support services. Towards Seamless Support makes recommendations on how best to support this vulnerable group of carers which may be useful for Young Carers Projects and other carer support services.

The report can be accessed from: <http://www.dundecarerscentre.org.uk/Home/Information/Research/Research-reports>



Unmarried Cohabiting Partners: A Growing Caregiver Population

by JOHN DAVY

<http://aginginaction.com/2011/05/unmarried-cohabitating-partners-a-growing-caregiver-population/>

As the population of older adults in need of care continues to rise, more informal care work is provided by family and friends. Evidence has shown that married older adults, particularly men, are likely to receive more informal care than their unmarried peers, with spouses (particularly wives) most likely to act as informal caregivers. Most of this evidence, however, comes from studies that overlook one of the fastest growing forms of family life for older adults: unmarried cohabitation by opposite-sex couples. An analysis of the large-scale Health and Retirement Study compares the likelihood of receiving partner care for married and unmarried older adult cohabitators, making an important contribution to the study of family life and older adults' well-being.

The study examines the receipt of care by physically frail older adults, comparing unmarried cohabitators to married spouses. The likelihood of receiving care, total hours of partner care, and dependence on partner care (in contrast to having access to other helpers) were all treated as care receipt outcomes. The gender and marital history of care recipients were also incorporated in the analysis, as well as other demographic characteristics such as age and employment. In contrast to married individuals within the study sample, most unmarried cohabitators had been married before and were more likely to be in poor health and have a lower net worth.

cohabitators with a disability were less likely to receive care from their partner than were similar married individuals

The analysis found that unmarried cohabitators with a disability were less likely to receive care from their partner than were similar married individuals. Among those partners who did provide care to a partner with a disability, however, unmarried cohabitators provided as much assistance as did spouses. This might suggest two different models of unmarried cohabitation: a high-involvement, interdependent relationship more akin to current marriage ideals, and a less-demanding, lower-commitment relationship. Future qualitative study may be able to explore this possibility.

In contrast to the repeated findings among married couples that husbands are more likely to receive care and wives are more likely to provide care, there were no significant gender influences in care receipt among unmarried cohabitators. The author suggests that older cohabitators may be "more unconventional than younger cohabitators" and hold different expectations of gender than younger cohabitators and older married individuals. This analysis of the Health and Retirement Study raises important issues for the study of the family lives, gender ideas, and well-being of older adults.

Source:

Noël-Miller CM (2011). "Partner Caregiving in Older Cohabiting Couples," *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 66(3):341-353

Review suggests Older Caregivers May Face Increased Risk of Cognitive Problems

Source: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/225096.php>

An older individual who cares for a spouse with dementia may be at an increased risk of developing cognitive problems because of the lifestyle that was shared with the spouse and because of the stress of caring for a loved one who is ill. These findings, which are published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, indicate that efforts are needed to help caregivers maintain their cognitive and functional health and their ability to care for those who need them.

Research indicates that, compared with non-caregivers, caregivers often have trouble with cognition, which involves attention and memory. To examine the issue more thoroughly, investigators reviewed the medical literature for studies that looked at the cognitive health of older adults caring for a family member (primarily a spouse) with dementia.

The review revealed that spouses who are caregivers may have a higher risk of cognitive impairment or dementia than spouses who are not caregivers. Their cognitive decline may be due to psychosocial factors such as depression, loneliness, social isolation, and sleep problems; behavioral factors such as exercise and diet; and physiological factors such as obesity, chronically elevated insulin and inflammation.

“Persons who are caring for a spouse with dementia may themselves be at risk for cognitive problems which, in turn, will not only negatively influence their quality of life, but may reduce their ability to provide the necessary care for their spouse,” said principal investigator Dr. Peter Vitaliano of the University of Washington School of Medicine. “Spouse caregivers are extremely important because most care-recipients prefer to be cared for in their homes, and, by remaining in their homes, health care costs are reduced greatly.”

The review argues for interventions that integrate strategies to reduce psychological distress in caregivers while promoting healthy behaviors, such as good diet and exercise. The authors note that community-level approaches may increase awareness and motivation. They point to Strength for Caring, an online resource for family caregivers that provides information, support, and ways to connect with other caregivers.

Full citation:

“Does Caring for a Spouse with Dementia Promote Cognitive Decline? A Hypothesis and Proposed Mechanisms.” Peter P. Vitaliano, Michael Murphy, Heather M. Young, Diana Echeverria and Soo Borson
Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 2011; DOI: 10.1111/j.1532-5415.2011.03368.

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