

7-Aug-06

PRESS RELEASE

NCPC working to Address the Needs of People with Dementia

It is estimated that by 2010 there will be around 870,000 people with dementia in the UK and this is expected to rise to over 1.8 million by 2050.

As numbers of people with this condition increase, dementia has become a topic of much current research, policy review and media attention.

Whilst it is essential to look into ways of preventing dementia in later life, - it is also vital that we address the issues surrounding living and dying with dementia now.

The National Council for Palliative Care (NCPC) is pleased to announce the release of their new discussion document *Exploring Palliative Care for People with Dementia*. The aim of this publication is to raise awareness and encourage debate around ensuring that people with dementia can access good quality care at the end of their life, a situation that, as the document highlights, is presently seldom available.

It discusses two important factors; Firstly that people with dementia often have other conditions of which they may die from and therefore professionals from all specialities need to be able to deliver palliative care for these people; and secondly that adults with dementia tend to be older than those dying from cancer and are more likely to have spent their last year of life in a care home so different approaches to palliative care are required.

"I stood outside her room and heard her scream with pain when they changed her. I asked for the morphine to be increased and was told that this would result in her becoming semi-conscious. I couldn't see why this was a problem. There seemed to be difficulty in understanding that my mother should be nursed appropriately for a dying person."

Exploring Palliative Care for People with Dementia follows recent Government announcements that highlight the need for greater equity of access to palliative care. People with dementia are currently receiving increased attention with consultation on continuing care policy, new legal rights around mental capacity and a 'new deal' promised for unpaid carers.

The unique characteristics of dementia which lead to a higher rate of depression and psychosis with reduced levels of understanding and memory loss, mean new ways of providing support and palliative care at the end of life are required.

This will be discussed further at NCPC's forthcoming national event *Understanding the Palliative Care Needs of People with Dementia: Working in Partnership* to be held in London on the 19th of October. The event, which includes speakers from the Alzheimer's Society, NCPC and the Healthcare Commission amongst others, will explore how to provide good practice in all settings, including care homes.

Eve Richardson, Chief Executive at NCPC said:

"NCPC considers the needs of people with dementia a priority to address and we aim to raise awareness of this which, in line with the other policy initiatives, should ensure that this group of people is no longer marginalised and unable to equitably access palliative care services."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. For further information and press and media enquiries contact our Communications and Publications Co-ordinator Alexa Gainsbury on 020 7697 1520, or email her at: publications@ncpc.org.uk

2. *Exploring Palliative Care for People with Dementia* will be available from the end of August at a cost of £15 per copy. To order the publication please contact Alexa Gainsbury on 020 7697 1520 or publications@ncpc.org.uk

3. *Understanding the Palliative Care Needs of People with Dementia* is now taking bookings. For more information contact our Events Co Ordinator Mridu Rana on 020 7697 1520 or email her at m.rana@ncpc.org.uk

3. The National Council for Palliative Care (formerly The National Council for Hospice and Specialist Palliative Care Services) is the umbrella organisation for all those who are involved in providing, commissioning and using hospice and palliative care services in England, Wales & Northern Ireland. It promotes the extension and improvement of palliative care services regardless of diagnosis in all health and social care settings and across all sectors to government, national and local policy makers. To read more about the National Council for Palliative Care log on to our website: www.ncpc.org.uk

4. The Cross Cutting Older People's Policy Group was established in 2004 in recognition that older people's needs often arise from a combination of conditions and thus they would not be served appropriately by established policy groups based on clinical conditions. Thus it was decided a cross cutting group concerned with the broader palliative care needs of older people would be established.

5. The National Council for Palliative Care is a registered charity in the UK. Registered as charity no: 1005671.

The National Council for Palliative Care

The Fitzpatrick Building
188 – 194 York Way, London, N7 9AS
Tel: 020 7697 1520 Fax: 020 7697 1530
www.ncpc.org.uk
enquiries@ncpc.org.uk